00052797

THE
ASIATIC SCOIETY OF BOMBAY
Town Hall, Bombay.

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 17 February, 2016

9x K.9

9x K. 9

THE POETICAL WORKS OF JOHN MILTON.

Ox. K 9 52797

EDITED BY

SIR EGERTON BRYDGES, BART.

WITH IMAGINATIVE ILLUSTRATIONS BY

J. M. W. TURNER, ESQ. R. A.

Is not each great, each amiable Muse
Of classic ages in our MILTON met?
A genius universal as his theme;
Astonishing as Chaos; as the bloom
Of blowing Eden fair; as Heaven sublime!

THOMSON.

IN SIX VOLUMES.

VOL. V.

LONDON:

JOHN MACRONE, ST. JAMES'S SQUARE.

MDCCCXXXV.

821.4
Mil/Poe
52797

LONDON:

PRINTED BY A. J. VALPY, M

RED LION COURT, FLEET STREET.

CONTENTS.

PAGE

Remarks on Milton's Versification 1

Samson Agonistes 13

Comus 153

Arcades 313

ILLUSTRATIONS.

VOL. V.

EUPHROSYNE.—L'ALLEGRO . . { R. WESTALL, R. A. F. BACON.

Come, thou goddess fair and free,
In Heaven ycleped Euphrosyne:
* * * * * *
Come, and trip it, as you go,
On the light fantastick toe.

LUDLOW CASTLE — RISING OF SABRINA, attended by Water-Nymphs . . . . . { J. M. W. TURNER, R. E. GOODALL.

By all the nymphs that nightly dance
Upon thy streams with wily glance,
Rise, rise, and heave thy rosy head
From thy coral-paven bed,
And bridle in thy headlong wave,
Till thou our summons answer'd have.

REMARKS

ON

MILTON'S VERSIFICATION.

REMARKS

ON

MILTON'S VERSIFICATION.

Dr. Johnson has written several pages on Milton's versification, which have been reprinted by Todd as an essay: the whole is written in Johnson's best manner; but I venture, however presumptuous it may appear, to assert that it is based on a theory wholly wrong. Johnson assumes, as many others have done, that the true heroic verse is the iambic; such as Dryden, Pope, and, I may add, Darwin, have brought to perfection; and that all variations from the iambic foot are irregularities, which may be pardonable for variety, but are still departures from the rule. Upon this ground, Milton is perpetually offending; and that which is among his primary beauties of metre is turned into a fault.

Let me be forgiven for my boldness in suggesting and exemplifying another theory of the great poet's versification, which I am convinced will be found a clew to the pronunciation of every

part of his blank verse, and especially in 'Paradise Lost.'

I believe that Milton's principle was to introduce into his lines every variety of metrical foot which is to be found in the Latin poetry, especially in the lyrics of Horace; such as not merely iambic, but spondee, dactyl, trochee, anapest, &c., and that whoever reads his lines as if they were prose, and accents them as the sense would dictate, will find that they fall into one, or rather several of these feet; often ending like the Latin, with a half foot: wherever they do not, I doubt not that it arises from a different mode of accenting some word from that which was the usage in Milton's time. If there is any attempt to read Milton's verses as iambics, with a mere occasional variation of the trochee and the spondee, they will often sound very lame, instead of being, as they really are, magnificently harmonious.

If Johnson's rules are adopted, some of Milton's most tuneful lines become inharmonious; and, in the same degree, one of Cowley's, exquisite if properly scanned, but which Johnson exhibits as very faulty—

And the soft wings of peace cover him round;—

this, taken to be an iambic, is full of false quantities: but I assume the proper mode of scanning it to be this:—

And thĕ | sōft wīngs | ŏf pēace | cōvĕr hĭm | round:

viz. first, a trochee; then a spondee; third, an

iambic; fourth, a dactyl; fifth, a demi-foot. Thus Milton,

Partaken, and uncropt falls to the ground,

should be scanned thus:—

Părtā|kĕn, and | ūncrōpt | făllş tŏ thĕ | grōund.

first, an iambic; second, an iambic; third, a spondee; fourth, a dactyl; fifth, a demi-foot.

Take the following:

Of sense, whereby they hear, see, smell, touch, taste,

which I accent thus:—

Of sēnse | whērebў | thĕy hēar, | sēe, smēll, | toūch, tāste.

first, an iambic; second, a spondee; third, an iambic; fourth, a spondee; fifth, a spondee.

The following lines, cited by Johnson, I scan thus:—

1. Wisdom to folly, as nourishment to wind.
   Wīsdŏm tŏ | fōllў ăs | nōurīsh|mēnt tŏ | wind.
2. No ungrateful food, and food alike those pure.
   Nŏ ŭngrāte|fŭl fōod | ānd fōod | ălīke | thōse pūre.
3. For we have also our evening and our morn.
   Fŏr wē | hāve ălsŏ | oŭr ēve|nīng ānd | oŭr mōrn.
4. Inhospitably, and kills their infant males.
   Inhōs|pĭtā|blў, ănd kīlls | thĕir īn|fănt māles.
5. And vital virtue infused, and vital warmth.
   And vī|tăl vīr|tūe ĭnfūsed | ănd vī|tăl wārmth.
6. God made thee of choice his own, and of his own.
   Gŏd mādе | thēe ŏf choĭce | hĭs ōwn | ănd ōf | hĭs ōwn.
7. Abominable, inutterable, and worse.
   Abō|mĭnā|blĕ, ĭnūt|tĕrā|blĕ, ānd | wōrse.

8. Impenetrable, impaled with circling fire.
Impē|nĕtrā|blĕ, īm|pāled wĭth | cīrclĭng | fire.

9. To none communicable in earth or heaven.
Tŏ nōne | cōmmū|nīcā|blĕ ĭn eārth | ŏr heāven.

10. In curls on either cheek play'd: wings he wore.
In cūrls | ŏn ēi|thĕr chēek | plāy'd: wĭngs | hĕ wōre.

11. Lies through the perplex'd paths of this drear wood.
Lĭes thrōugh | thĕ pĕrplĕx'd | pāths ŏf | thĭs drēar | wood.

12. On him, who had stole Jove's authentick fire.
On hĭm | whŏ hād | stōle Jōve's | aŭthēn|tĭck fīre.

13. Universal reproach, far worse to bear.
Unĭvēr|sāl rē|prōach, fār | wōrse tŏ | beār.

14. With them from bliss to the bottomless deep.
Wĭth thēm | frŏm blĭss | tŏ thĕ | bŏttŏmlĕss | dēep.

15. Present? thus to his son audibly spake.
Prēsĕnt? | thūs tŏ | hĭs sŏn | aūdĭblў | spāke.

16. Thy lingering, or with one stroke of this dart.
Thў lĭn|gĕrĭng, ōr | wĭth ōne | strōke ŏf | thĭs dārt.

17. To do aught good never will be our task.
Tŏ dō | aūght goōd | nĕvĕr wĭll | bē oūr | tāsk.

18. Created hugest, that swim the ocean stream.
Crĕā|tĕd hūgĕst | thăt swĭm | thĕ ō|ceăn streām.

19. Came singly where he stood on the bare strand.
Cāme sĭng|lў whēre | hĕ stōod | ŏn thĕ bāre | strānd.

20. Light from above, from the fountain of light.
Līght frŏm | ăbōve, | frōm thĕ | foūntăin ŏf | līght.

21. Things not reveal'd, which the invisible king.
Thĭngs nōt | rĕveāl'd | whĭch thĕ | ĭnvĭsĭ|blĕ kĭng.

22. With their bright luminaries, that set and rose.
Wĭth theĭr | brīght lū|mĭnā|rĭes thăt sēt | ănd rōse.

Dr. Johnson, assuming the iambic to be the true heroic measure of English poetry, says that Milton has seldom two pure lines together. So far from it, he has a long succession of lines in every book of unbroken harmony, if we allow the variety of feet which he undoubtedly adopted as a system. The critic's false principle of our verse continually leads him to blame as faulty what in truth is harmonious; thus, having said that the elision of one vowel before another beginning the next word is contrary to the genius of our language, he is often driven to make this elision by his false rule; as in this line,—

Wisdom to folly, as nourishment to wind.

Here he cuts off the last syllable of "folly" before "as:" but the verse, properly scanned, does not require it to be cut off:

Wīsdŏm | tŏ fŏl|lў ăs nōu|rĭshmēnt | tŏ wīnd.

All that Johnson says, as to the principle to be adopted on varying the pauses in parts of a verse or of two or more verses taken together, seems to be whimsical and unfounded; but if true, would go to render faulty what is the real spell of Milton's sonorous variety of harmony. He asserts that there can be no metrical harmony in a succession of less than three syllables, and that every pause ought in itself to have metrical harmony and therefore that the pause on a monosyllable at the commencement of a line is bad. This would condemn some of Milton's most musical lines. The truth is, that Milton's paragraphs contain a

succession of varied pauses "linked together" with the most perfect skill; and in not one of the places, where they are censured by the critic, are they any other than beautiful or grand. In almost every case, the sense demands that we should lay the accent where the metre demands it, unless we insist upon pure iambics.

That I may not be considered unjust to Johnson, I cite a specimen of his remarks in his own words: "When a single syllable is cut off from the rest, it must either be united to the line with which the sense connects it, or sounded alone: if it be united to the other line, it corrupts its harmony; if disjoined, it must stand alone, and with regard to music, be superfluous; for there is no harmony in a single sound, because it has no proportion to another:"—

> Hypocrites austerely talk,
> Defaming as impure what God declares
> Pure; and commands to some, leaves free to all.

Here the emphatic word "pure"* derives double force from its position. The other passages next cited by Johnson are pre-eminently beautiful. I am utterly astonished at Johnson's want of ear and of taste on this occasion.

Todd very justly says, that "the fineness of Milton's pauses, and flow of his verses into each

* Todd has cited an excellent observation, contrary to this, from T. Sheridan's "Lectures on the Art of Reading," vol. ii. p. 258.

other, eminently appears in the very entrance of his 'Paradise Lost,' in the first lines of which, the same numbers, in every respect, are hardly once repeated; as Mr. Say has observed in his 'Remarks on the Numbers of Paradise Lost,' 1745, p. 126."

But as Johnson can never write long without writing some things justly and powerfully, I cannot refrain from citing the following passages:—

"It has been long observed, that the idea of beauty is vague and undefined; different in different minds, and diversified by time and place," &c.

"It is in many cases apparent that this quality is merely relative and comparative; that we pronounce things beautiful, because they have something, which we agree, for whatever reason, to call beauty, in a greater degree than we have been accustomed to find it in other things of the same kind; and that we transfer the epithet as our knowledge increases, and appropriate it to higher excellence, when higher excellence comes within our view. Much of the beauty of writing is of this kind; and therefore Boileau justly remarks, that the books which have stood the test of time, and been admired through all the changes which the mind of man has suffered, from the various evolutions of knowledge, and the prevalence of contrary customs, have a better claim to our regard than any modern can boast; because the long continuance of their reputation

proves that they are adequate to our faculties and agreeable to nature.

"It is, however, the task of criticism to establish principles; to improve opinion into knowledge; and to distinguish those means of pleasing which depend upon known causes and rational deduction, from the nameless and inexplicable elegances which appeal wholly to the fancy; from which we feel delight, but know not how they produce it; and which may well be termed the enchantresses of the soul. Criticism reduces those regions of literature under the dominion of science, which have hitherto known only the anarchy of ignorance, the caprices of fancy, and the tyranny of prescription."

Johnson, no doubt, did right in endeavouring to establish principles and rules with regard to versification; but wrong principles do more harm than none at all. Either Johnson is on this subject wrong, or Milton is a very bad versifier: I do not think that any man of taste, or a tolerable ear, will in these days adopt the latter opinion: I do not believe that any one will endure the monotony of the pure iambic couplet carried beyond twenty or thirty lines. The occasional intermixture of the metrical feet of the ancients, judiciously applied, distinguishes Milton's blank verse from all other in our language. Iambic blank verse, or that which approaches to iambic, or even a mixed spondaic, wants all its force and diversity; or often becomes languid and diffuse, without the variety of musical prose.

As Milton's style is always condensed and full of matter, it may be said to have a tendency to harshness; for there is no doubt that our language is too much loaded with consonants, especially in our nouns and verbs: but if properly pronounced, there is no poetical author who has more sonorous or soft verses. At the same time, it must be admitted, that he has less fluency than Shakspeare, or even Spenser; but certainly more nerve and strength than either of them. Shakspeare has a more idiomatic combination of words, with a simple, beautiful, and spell-like colloquiality: Milton's combinations are new, learned, and often, perhaps too often, latinised: he is never trite: his mind always appears in full tension, and apart from the vulgar and the light.

SAMSON AGONISTES,

A DRAMATICK POEM.

Τραγῳδία μίμησις πράξεως σπουδαίας, κ. τ. λ.

ARISTOT. 'Poet.' cap. 6.

Tragœdia est imitatio actionis seriæ, &c. per misericordiam et metum perficiens talium affectuum lustrationem.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

THE excellence of this drama, which strictly follows the Greek model, lies principally in its majestic moral strength: the two preceding poems are divine epics; this deals entirely in topics of human nature and human manners. It is not adapted to exhibition on the stage: it is too didactic; and has too few actors and too few incidents. The fable, the characters, the sentiments, and the language are all admirably preserved: the story does not linger, as some have pretended; but goes forward with intense interest to the end. The opening is in the chastest style of poetical beauty. "The breath of heaven fresh-blowing" gives ease to Samson's body, but not to his mind, which, when in solitude and at leisure, agonises his heart with regrets. Nothing can be more pathetic than the comparison of his present fallen state with his early hopes and past glories; and then the reflection that for this change he had no one to blame but himself:—

O loss of sight, of thee I most complain!
Blind amongst enemies, O worse than chains,
Dungeon, or beggary, or decrepit age!
Light, the prime work of God, to me is extinct,
And all her various objects of delight
Annull'd, which might in part my grief have eased, &c.

The observations of the Chorus, descriptive of Samson's dejected appearance in this situation, are very fine, contrasted with the recollection of his former mighty actions and triumphs :—

> O mirrour of our fickle state,
> Since man on earth unparallel'd,
> The rarer thy example stands,
> By how much from the top of wondrous glory,
> Strongest of mortal men,
> To lowest pitch of abject fortune thou art fallen.

The dialogues between Samson and his father are every where supported with force, elevation, and moral wisdom; and the unexampled simplicity of the language in which they are conveyed augments the deep impression which they every where make.

Perhaps, as a summary of divine dispensations, nothing even in Milton can be found so awful and comprehensive.

Then bursts forth, at verse 667, that complaint of most deep and stupendous eloquence, beginning,—

> God of our fathers, what is man!

Then enters Dalila, with the renewal of all her arts, and coquetries, and false smiles. With what a proud and overwhelming scorn does the hero treat her insidious advances! what a contrast is Dalila to Eve, even when, like Eve to Adam, she affects to own her transgression! Samson exclaims, v. 748.

> Out, out, hyæna! these are thy wonted arts,
> And arts of every woman false like thee,
> To break all faith, all vows, deceive, betray;
> Then, as repentant, to submit, beseech,
> And reconcilement move with feign'd remorse,
> Confess, and promise wonders in her change;

Not truly penitent, but chief to try
Her husband, how far urged his patience bears,
His virtue or weakness which way to assail:
Then with more cautious and instructed skill
Again transgresses, and again submits;
That wisest and best men full oft beguiled,
With goodness principled not to reject
The penitent, but ever to forgive,
Are drawn to wear out miserable days,
Entangled with a poisonous bosom snake,
If not by quick destruction soon cut off,
As I by thee, to ages an example.

As the dialogue goes on, each party speaks in that natural train which leads to the consummation of the tragedy; and with poetic force and plenitude of rich sentiment, which belong to Milton alone.

All poetry of a high order is produced by a union of all the best faculties of the mind, and all the noblest emotions of the heart. What is called the understanding, or reason, alone, will produce no poetry at all: even the imagination added to it will not be sufficient, unless there be sentiment and pathos raised by what that imagination presents. To supply the materials of that imagination, there must be observation, knowledge, learning, and memory. In the amalgamation of all these Milton's drama excels.

The character of Samson Agonistes is magnificently supported: he speaks always in a tone becoming his circumstances, his position, his sufferings, and his destiny: every thing is grand, animated, natural, and soul-elating.

It is a minor sort of poetry to relate things as a stander-by: the author must throw himself into the character of the person represented, and speak in his name. Pope, in his characters of men and women, tells us their several opinions and passions; but these opinions and passions should be uttered by themselves. There is a sympathy we feel with

the eloquent relater of his own sorrows, which cannot be raised by the relation of a third person.

The character of Manoah, Samson's father, is full of nature and parental affection.

The Chorus is every where attractive by poetry, moral wisdom, and eloquent pathos. I will not disguise my opinion, that the versification of these lyrical parts is occasionally, and only occasionally, inharmonious, abrupt, and harsh; and such as my ear can scarcely reconcile to any sort of metre.

The sudden presage which prompted Samson to consent to exhibit himself in the theatre, after the stern reluctance he had previously expressed, is very sublime.

The tone of the whole drama is in the highest degree of elevation: the thoughts, sentiments, and words are those of a mental giant.

Added to the mighty interest which these create, is the conviction that through the whole the poet has a relation to his own case;—his blindness, his proscription, his poverty,

With darkness, and with danger compass'd round;—

his fortitude, his defiance, his unimpaired strength, his loftiness of soul, his conscious power from the vastness of his intellect, and the firmness of his principles.

OF THAT SORT OF DRAMATICK POEM WHICH IS CALLED TRAGEDY.[1]

[WRITTEN BY MILTON HIMSELF.]

TRAGEDY, as it was anciently composed, hath been ever held the gravest, moralest, and most profitable of all other poems: therefore said by Aristotle to be of power, by raising pity and fear, or terrour, to purge the mind of those and such like passions, that is, to temper and reduce them to just measure with a kind of delight, stirred up by reading or seeing those passions well imitated. Nor is Nature wanting in her own effects to make good his assertion: for so, in physick,[2] things of

[1] *Of that sort of dramatick poem, called Tragedy.* Milton, who was inclined to puritanism, had good reason to think that the publication of his 'Samson Agonistes' would be very offensive to his brethren, who held poetry, and particularly that of the dramatic kind, in the greatest abhorrence: and, upon this account, it is probable, that, in order to excuse himself from having engaged in this proscribed and forbidden species of writing, he thought it expedient to prefix to his play a formal defence of tragedy. T. WARTON.

[2] *For so, in physick,* &c. These expressions of Milton may be supposed to refer to the doctrine of signatures then in vogue; which had been introduced by Paracelsus between the years 1530 and 1540, and which inferred the

melancholick hue and quality are used against melancholy, sour against sour, salt to remove salt humours: hence philosophers and other gravest writers, as Cicero, Plutarch, and others, frequently cite out of tragick poets, both to adorn and illustrate their discourse. The apostle Paul himself thought it not unworthy to insert a verse of Euripides[3] into the text of Holy Scripture,

propriety of the use of any vegetable or mineral in medicine, from the similarity of colour, shape, or appearance, which these remedies might bear to the part affected. Thus yellow things, as saffron, turmeric, &c. were given in liver complaints, from their analogy of colour to the bile; and other remedies were given in nephritic disorders, because the seed or leaf of the plant resembled the kidney. See Paracelsus, 'Labyrinth. Med.' c. 8. and Dr. Pemberton's very elegant preface to the English edition of the 'London Dispensary.'—DUNSTER.

[3] *A verse of Euripides.* The verse, here quoted, is "Evil communications corrupt good manners:" but I am inclined to think that Milton is mistaken in calling it a verse of Euripides; for Jerome and Grotius, (who published the fragments of Menander) and the best commentators, ancient and modern, say that it is taken from the 'Thais' of Menander, and it is extant among the fragments of Menander, p. 79. Le Clerc's edit. Such slips of memory may be found sometimes in the best writers.—NEWTON.

Mr. Glasse, the learned translator of this tragedy into Greek iambics, agrees with Dr. Newton. Dr. Macknight, in his excellent 'Translation of the Epistles,' is of opinion, that the sentiment is of elder date than the time of Menander; that it was one of the proverbial verses commonly received among the Greeks, the author of which cannot now be known. Clemens Alexandrinus calls it a tragic

1 Cor. xv. 33; and Paræus, commenting on the Revelation, divides the whole book as a tragedy, into acts distinguished each by a chorus of heavenly harpings and song between. Heretofore men in highest dignity have laboured not a little to be thought able to compose a tragedy: of that honour Dionysius the elder was no less ambitious, than before of his attaining to the tyranny. Augustus Cæsar also had begun his Ajax; but, unable to please his own judgement with what he had begun, left it unfinished. Seneca, the philosopher, is by some thought the authour of those tragedies (at least the best of them) that go under that name. Gregory Nazianzen, a father of the church, thought it not unbeseeming the sanctity of his person to write a tragedy,[4] which is entitled 'Christ Suffering.' This is mentioned to vindicate tragedy from the small esteem, or rather infamy, which in the account of many it undergoes at this day with other common interludes; happening through the poet's errour of intermixing comick stuff with tragick sadness and gravity; or introducing trivial and vulgar persons, which by all judicious hath

iambic, 'Strom.' lib. i. and Socrates the historian expressly assigns it to Euripides, 'Ecc. Hist.' lib. iii. cap. 16. ed. Vales. p. 189. It is extant indeed in the fragments of Euripides, as well as in those of the comic writer. Milton therefore is not to be charged with forgetfulness or mistake. —Todd.

[4] *A tragedy*, &c. A very severe, but very just criticism, on this tragedy of Gregory, which has been too much applauded.—Jos. Warton.

been counted absurd; and brought in without discretion, corruptly to gratify the people. And though ancient tragedy use no prologue,[5] yet using sometimes, in case of self-defence, or explanation, that which Martial calls an epistle; in behalf of this tragedy coming forth after the ancient manner, much different from what among us passes for best, thus much beforehand may be epistled; that Chorus is here introduced after the Greek manner, not ancient only but modern, and still in use among the Italians. In the modeling therefore of this poem, with good reason, the ancients and Italians are rather followed, as of much more authority and fame. The measure of verse used in the Chorus is of all sorts, called by the Greeks monostrophick, or rather apolelymenon,[6] without regard had to strophe, antistrophe, or epode, which were a kind of stanzas framed only for the musick, then used with the Chorus that sung; not essential to the poem, and therefore not material; or, being divided into stanzas or pauses, they may be called allæostropha. Division into act and scene, referring chiefly to the stage, (to which this work never was intended) is here omitted.

It suffices if the whole drama be found not produced beyond the fifth act. Of the style and uniformity, and that commonly called the plot,

[5] *Though ancient tragedy use no prologue.* That is, no prologue apologising for the poet, as we find the ancient comedy did. See Terence's prologues.—HURD.

[6] *Apolelymenon.* Free from the restraint of any particular measure, not from all measure whatsoever.—HURD.

whether intricate or explicit, which is nothing indeed but such œconomy, or disposition of the fable, as may stand best with verisimilitude and decorum; they only will best judge who are not unacquainted with Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, the three tragick poets unequaled yet by any, and the best rule to all who endeavour to write tragedy. The circumscription of time, wherein the whole drama begins and ends, is, according to ancient rule and best example, within the space of twenty-four hours.

ARGUMENT

TO

SAMSON AGONISTES.

SAMSON, made captive, blind,* and now in the prison at Gaza, there to labour as in a common workhouse, on a

* *Samson, made captive, blind,* &c. Mr. Upton is the first critic who has observed, what yet is obvious, that in this tragedy Samson "imprisoned and blind, and the captive state of Israel, livelily represent our blind poet with the republican party, after the Restoration, afflicted and persecuted." See his 'Crit. Observ. on Shakspeare,' 1748, p. 144. I must add, that Milton, who artfully envelops much of his own history and of the times in this drama, had long before used the character and situation of Samson for a temporary allegory in 'The Reason of Church Government,' b. ii. conclusion. He supposes Samson to be a king, who, being disciplined in temperance, grows perfect in strength, his illustrious and sunny locks being the laws: while these are undiminished and unshorn, with the jaw-bone of an ass, that is, with the word of his meanest officer, he defeats thousands of his adversaries: but, reclining his head on the lap of flattering prelates, while he sleeps, they cut off those bright tresses of his laws and prerogatives, once his ornament and defence, delivering him over to violent and oppressive counsellors; who, like the Philistines, extinguish the eyes of his natural discernment, forcing him to grind in the prison-house of their insidious designs against his power: "till he, knowing this prelatical rasor to have bereft him of his wonted might, nourish again

festival day, in the general cessation from labour, comes forth into the open air, to a place nigh, somewhat retired, there to sit awhile and bemoan his condition; where he happens at length to be visited by certain friends and equals of his tribe, which make the Chorus, who seek to comfort him what they can; then by his old father Manoah, who endeavours the like, and withal tells him his purpose to procure his liberty by ransom; lastly, that this feast was proclaimed by the Philistines as a day of thanksgiving for their deliverance from the hands of Samson, which yet more troubles him. Manoah then departs to prosecute his endeavour with the Philistine lords for Samson's redemption; who in the mean while is visited by other persons, and lastly by a public officer to require his coming to the feast before the lords and people, to play or show his strength in their presence: he at first refuses, dismissing the public officer with absolute denial to come; at length, persuaded inwardly that this was from God, he yields to go along with him, who came now the second time with great threatenings

his puissant hair, the golden beams of law and right; and they, sternly shook, thunder with ruin upon the heads of those his evil counsellors, but not without great affliction to himself."—T. WARTON.

The younger Richardson, in his manuscript observations on this tragedy, has noticed the allusions of the poet to the history of himself and of his own days. "The poem," he remarks, "was written when the saints were oppressed, and in little appearance of ever seeing their own times again: therefore the conclusion is with a view to comfort them, as well as himself, by so great an example of Providence, 'Aye watching o'er his saints with eye unseene,' as he writes on the glass window at Chalfont. This Milton loves to allude to in all his writings, and is the great moral of this tragedy, as Mr. Pope observed to me: and, considering this point farther some days afterwards, I am persuaded Milton must have a view to himself in Samson."—TODD.

to fetch him: the Chorus yet remaining on the place, Manoah returns full of joyful hope, to procure ere long his son's deliverance: in the midst of which discourse a Hebrew comes in haste, confusedly at first, and afterwards more distinctly, relating the catastrophe, what Samson had done to the Philistines, and by accident to himself; wherewith the tragedy ends.

THE PERSONS.

SAMSON.
MANOAH, the father of Samson.
DALILA, his wife.
HARAPHA, of Gath.
Publick Officer.
Messenger.
Chorus of Danites.

The scene before the prison in Gaza.

SAMSON AGONISTES.

SAMSON, (*Attendant leading him.*)

A LITTLE onward[1] lend thy guiding hand
To these dark steps,[2] a little further on;
For yonder bank[3] hath choice of sun or shade:
There I am wont to sit, when any chance
Relieves me from my task of servile toil,
Daily in the common prison else enjoin'd me,
Where I, a prisoner, chain'd, scarce freely draw
The air imprison'd also, close and damp,
Unwholesome draught: but here I feel amends,

* *Samson Agonistes.* That is, Samson an actor; Samson, being represented in a play Agonistes, ludio, histrio, actor, scenicus.—NEWTON.

Agonistes is here rather *athleta.* The subject of the drama is Samson brought forth to exhibit his athletic powers. See ver. 1314. That such was Milton's intended sense of "Agonistes," may farther be collected from his use of the word "antagonist," ver. 1628.—DUNSTER.

The breath of heaven fresh blowing,[4] pure and sweet,
With day-spring born; here leave me to respire.—
This day a solemn feast the people hold
To Dagon their sea-idol,[5] and forbid
Laborious works; unwillingly this rest
Their superstition yields me; hence with leave
Retiring from the popular noise, I seek
This unfrequented place to find some ease,
Ease to the body some, none to the mind
From restless thoughts, that, like a deadly swarm
Of hornets arm'd, no sooner found alone,
But rush upon me thronging,[6] and present
Times past, what once I was, and what am now.[7]
O, wherefore was my birth from Heaven foretold
Twice by an angel,[8] who at last in sight
Of both my parents all in flames ascended
From off the altar, where an offering burn'd,
As in a fiery column charioting
His godlike presence, and from some great act
Or benefit reveal'd to Abraham's race?
Why was my breeding order'd and prescribed
As of a person separate to God,
Design'd for great exploits; if I must die
Betray'd, captived, and both my eyes put out,
Made of my enemies the scorn and gaze;
To grind in brazen fetters under task
With this heaven-gifted strength? O glorious strength,
Put to the labour of a beast, debased
Lower than bond-slave! Promise was, that I
Should Israel from Philistian yoke deliver:

Ask for this great deliverer now,[9] and find him
Eyeless in Gaza at the mill with slaves,
Himself in bonds under Philistian yoke:
Yet stay; let me not rashly call in doubt
Divine prediction: what if all foretold
Had been fulfill'd but through mine own default,
Whom have I to complain of but myself?
Who this high gift of strength committed to me,
In what part lodged, how easily bereft me,
Under the seal of silence could not keep,
But weakly to a woman must reveal it,
O'ercome with importunity and tears.
O impotence of mind, in body strong!
But what is strength without a double share
Of wisdom?[10] vast, unwieldy, burdensome,
Proudly secure, yet liable to fall
By weakest subtleties; not made to rule,
But to subserve where wisdom bears command!
God, when he gave me strength, to show withal
How slight the gift was, hung it in my hair.
But peace, I must not quarrel with the will
Of highest dispensation, which herein
Haply had ends above my reach to know:
Suffices that to me strength is my bane,
And proves the source of all my miseries;
So many, and so huge, that each apart
Would ask a life to wail; but chief of all,
O loss of sight, of thee I most complain!
Blind among enemies, O worse than chains,
Dungeon, or beggary, or decrepit age!
Light, the prime work of God, to me is extinct,
And all her various objects of delight

Annull'd, which might in part my grief have eased,
Inferiour to the vilest now become
Of man or worm; the vilest here excel me:
They creep, yet see; I, dark in light, exposed
To daily fraud, contempt, abuse, and wrong,
Within doors or without, still as a fool,
In power of others, never in my own;
Scarce half I seem to live, dead more than half.[11]
O dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon,
Irrecoverably dark,[12] total eclipse
Without all hope of day!
O first-created Beam, and thou great Word,
"Let there be light, and light was over all;"
Why am I thus bereaved thy prime decree?
The sun to me is dark
And silent as the moon,[13]
When she deserts the night,
Hid in her vacant interlunar cave.
Since light so necessary is to life,
And almost life itself, if it be true
That light is in the soul,
She all in every part; why was the sight
To such a tender ball as the eye confined,
So obvious and so easy to be quench'd?
And not, as feeling, through all parts diffused,
That she might look at will through every pore?
Then had I not been thus exiled from light,
As in the land of darkness, yet in light,
To live a life half dead, a living death,
And buried; but, O yet more miserable!
My self my sepulchre, a moving grave;

Buried, yet not exempt,
By privilege of death and burial,
From worst of other evils, pains and wrongs;
But made hereby obnoxious more
To all the miseries of life,
Life in captivity
Among inhuman foes.
But who are these? for with joint pace I hear
The tread of many feet[14] steering this way;[15]
Perhaps my enemies, who come to stare
At my affliction, and perhaps to insult,
Their daily practice to afflict me more.

Enter CHORUS.

CHO. This, this is he; softly awhile;
Let us not break in upon him:
O change beyond report, thought, or belief!
See how he lies at random, carelessly diffused,[16]
With languish'd head unpropp'd,
As one past hope, abandon'd,
And by himself given over;
In slavish habit, ill-fitted weeds
O'erworn and soil'd;
Or do my eyes misrepresent? Can this be he,
That heroick, that renown'd,
Irresistible Samson? whom unarm'd
No strength of man, or fiercest wild beast, could withstand;
Who tore the lion, as the lion tears the kid;
Ran on embattel'd armies clad in iron;
And, weaponless himself,
Made arms ridiculous,[17] useless the forgery

Of brazen shield and spear, the hammer'd cuirass,
Chalybean temper'd steel,[18] and frock of mail
Adamantëan proof?
But safest he who stood aloof,
When insupportably his foot advanced,[19]
In scorn of their proud arms and warlike tools,
Spurn'd them to death by troops. The bold Ascalonite[20]
Fled from his lion ramp;[21] old warriours turn'd
Their plated backs[22] under his heel;
Or, groveling, soil'd their crested helmets[23] in the dust.
Then with what trivial weapon came to hand,
The jaw of a dead ass, his sword of bone,
A thousand foreskins fell, the flower of Palestine,
In Ramath-lechi, famous to this day.[24]
Then by main force pull'd up, and on his shoulders bore
The gates of Azza,[25] post, and massy bar,
Up to the hill by Hebron, seat of giants old,[26]
No journey of a sabbath-day, and loaded so;
Like whom the Gentiles feign to bear up heaven.
Which shall I first bewail,
Thy bondage or lost sight,
Prison within prison
Inseparably dark?
Thou art become (O worst imprisonment!)
The dungeon of thyself; thy soul,
(Which men enjoying sight oft without cause complain)
Imprison'd now indeed,
In real darkness of the body dwells,[27]

Shut up from outward light
To incorporate with gloomy night;
For inward light, alas!
Puts forth no visual beam.[28]
O mirrour of our fickle state![29]
Since man on earth unparallel'd,
The rarer thy example stands,
By how much from the top of wondrous glory,
Strongest of mortal men,
To lowest pitch of abject fortune thou art fallen.
For him I reckon not in high estate,
Whom long descent of birth,[30]
Or the sphere of fortune[31] raises;
But thee, whose strength, while virtue was her mate,
Might have subdued the earth,
Universally crown'd with highest praises.[32]

Sam. I hear the sound of words; their sense the air
Dissolves unjointed ere it reach my ear.

Cho. He speaks: let us draw nigh. Matchless in might,
The glory late of Israel, now the grief;
We come, thy friends and neighbours not unknown,
From Eshtaol and Zora's fruitful vale,[33]
To visit or bewail thee;[34] or, if better,
Counsel or consolation we may bring,
Salve to thy sores: apt words have power to swage
The tumours of a troubled mind,
And are as balm to fester'd wounds.

SAM. Your coming, friends, revives me; for I learn
Now of my own experience, not by talk,
How counterfeit a coin[35] they are who friends
Bear in their superscription: (of the most
I would be understood) in prosperous days[36]
They swarm, but in adverse withdraw their head,
Not to be found, though sought. Ye see, O friends,
How many evils have inclosed me round;
Yet that which was the worst now least afflicts me,[37]
Blindness; for had I sight, confused with shame,
How could I once look up, or heave the head,
Who, like a foolish pilot, have shipwreck'd
My vessel[38] trusted to me from above,
Gloriously rigg'd; and for a word, a tear,
Fool! have divulged the secret gift of God
To a deceitful woman? tell me, friends,
Am I not sung and proverb'd for a fool
In every street? do they not say, how well
Are come upon him his deserts? yet why?
Immeasurable strength they might behold
In me, of wisdom nothing more than mean:
This with the other should, at least, have pair'd;
These two, proportion'd ill, drove me transverse.

CHO. Tax not divine disposal; wisest men
Have err'd, and by bad women been deceived;
And shall again, pretend they ne'er so wise.
Deject not then so overmuch thyself,
Who hast of sorrow thy full load besides:
Yet, truth to say, I oft have heard men wonder

Why thou shouldst wed Philistian women rather,
Than of thine own tribe fairer, or as fair,
At least of thy own nation, and as noble.

SAM. The first I saw at Timna, and she pleased
Me, not my parents,[39] that I sought to wed
The daughter of an infidel: they knew not
That what I motion'd was of God; I knew
From intimate impulse, and therefore urged
The marriage on; that by occasion hence
I might begin Israel's deliverance,
The work to which I was divinely[40] call'd.
She proving false, the next I took to wife
(O, that I never had! fond wish too late)
Was in the vale of Sorec, Dalila,
That specious monster,[41] my accomplish'd snare.[42]
I thought it lawful from my former act,
And the same end; still watching to oppress
Israel's oppressours: of what now I suffer
She was not the prime cause, but I my self,
Who, vanquish'd with a peal of words, (O, weakness!)
Gave up my fort of silence to a woman.

CHO. In seeking just occasion to provoke
The Philistine, thy country's enemy,
Thou never wast remiss, I bear thee witness:
Yet Israel still serves with all his sons.

SAM. That fault[43] I take not on me, but transfer
On Israel's governours and heads of tribes,
Who, seeing those great acts which God had done
Singly by me against their conquerours,
Acknowledged not, or not at all consider'd,
Deliverance offer'd: I, on the other side,

Used no ambition[44] to commend my deeds;
The deeds themselves, though mute, spoke loud the doer:
But they persisted deaf, and would not seem
To count them things worth notice, till at length
Their lords the Philistines with gather'd powers
Enter'd Judea seeking me, who then
Safe to the rock of Etham[45] was retired;
Not flying, but forecasting in what place
To set upon them, what advantaged best:
Meanwhile the men of Judah, to prevent
The harass of their land, beset me round:
I willingly on some conditions came
Into their hands, and they as gladly yield me,
To the uncircumcised a welcome prey,
Bound with two cords; but cords to me were threads
Touch'd with the flame: on their whole host I flew
Unarm'd, and with a trivial weapon fell'd
Their choicest youth; they only lived who fled.
Had Judah that day join'd, or one whole tribe,
They had by this possess'd the towers of Gath,
And lorded over them whom now they serve:
But what more oft, in nations grown corrupt,[46]
And by their vices brought to servitude,
Than to love bondage more than liberty,
Bondage with ease than strenuous liberty;
And to despise, or envy, or suspect
Whom God hath of his special favour raised
As their deliverer? if he aught begin,
How frequent to desert him,[47] and at last

To heap ingratitude on worthiest deeds?
CHO. Thy words to my remembrance bring
How Succoth and the fort of Penuel[48]
Their great deliverer contemn'd,
The matchless Gideon, in pursuit
Of Madian and her vanquish'd kings:
And how ingrateful Ephraim[49]
Had dealt with Jephthah, who by argument,
Not worse than by his shield and spear,
Defended Israel from the Ammonite,
Had not his prowess quell'd their pride
In that sore battel, when so many died
Without reprieve, adjudged to death,
For want of well pronouncing Shibboleth.
SAM. Of such examples add me to the roll;
Me easily indeed mine may neglect,
But God's proposed deliverance not so.
CHO. Just are the ways of God,
And justifiable to men;
Unless there be, who think not God at all:
If any be, they walk obscure;
For of such doctrine never was there school,
But the heart of the fool,[50]
And no man therein doctor but himself.[51]
Yet more there be, who doubt his ways not just,
As to his own edicts found contradicting,
Then give the reins to wandering thought,
Regardless of his glory's diminution;[52]
Till, by their own perplexities involved,
They ravel more, still less resolved,
But never find self-satisfying solution.
As if they would confine the Interminable,

And tie him to his own prescript,
Who made our laws to bind us, not himself,
And hath full right to exempt
Whom so it pleases him by choice
From national obstriction, without taint
Of sin, or legal debt;
For with his own laws he can best dispense.
He would not else, who never wanted means,
Nor in respect of the enemy just cause,
To set his people free,
Have prompted this heroick Nazarite,
Against his vow of strictest purity,[53]
To seek in marriage that fallacious bride,
Unclean, unchaste.
Down, reason, then; at least, vain reasonings, down;
Though reason here aver,
That moral verdict quits her of unclean:[54]
Unchaste was subsequent; her stain not his.
But see, here comes thy reverend sire
With careful steps, locks white as down,
Old Manoah: advise
Forthwith how thou oughtst to receive him.
SAM. Ay me! Another inward grief, awaked
With mention of that name, renews the assault.

Enter MANOAH.

MAN. Brethren and men of Dan, for such ye seem,
Though in this uncouth place; if old respect,
As I suppose, towards your once gloried friend,
My son, now captive, hither hath inform'd

Your younger feet, while mine cast back with age
Came lagging after; say if he be here.
Chor. As signal now in low dejected state,
As erst in highest, behold him where he lies.
Man. O miserable change![56] is this the man,
That invincible Samson, far renown'd,
The dread of Israel's foes, who with a strength
Equivalent to angels, walk'd their streets,
None offering fight; who single combatant
Duel'd their armies rank'd in proud array,
Himself an army, now unequal match
To save himself against a coward arm'd
At one spear's length! O ever-failing trust
In mortal strength! and, O, what not in man
Deceivable and vain? Nay, what thing good
Pray'd for, but often proves our woe, our bane?
I pray'd for children, and thought barrenness
In wedlock a reproach; I gain'd a son,
And such a son as all men hail'd me happy:—
Who would be now a father in my stead?
O, wherefore did God grant me my request,
And as a blessing with such pomp adorn'd?
Why are his gifts desirable, to tempt
Our earnest prayers; then, given with solemn hand
As graces, draw a scorpion's tail behind?[57]
For this did the angel twice descend? for this
Ordain'd thy nurture holy, as of a plant[58]
Select, and sacred, glorious for a while,
The miracle of men; then in an hour

Ensnared, assaulted, overcome, led bound,[59]
Thy foes' derision, captive, poor, and blind,
Into a dungeon thrust, to work with slaves?
Alas! methinks whom God hath chosen once
To worthiest deeds, if he through frailty err,
He should not so o'erwhelm, and as a thrall
Subject him to so foul indignities,
Be it but for honour's sake of former deeds.

SAM. Appoint[60] not heavenly disposition, father:
Nothing of all these evils hath befallen me
But justly; I myself have brought them on,
Sole authour I, sole cause: if aught seem vile,
As vile hath been my folly, who have profaned
The mystery of God given me under pledge
Of vow, and have betray'd it to a woman,
A Canaanite, my faithless enemy.
This well I knew, nor was at all surprised,
But warn'd by oft experience: did not she
Of Timna first betray me, and reveal
The secret wrested from me in her highth
Of nuptial love profess'd, carrying it straight
To them who had corrupted her, my spies,
And rivals? In this other was there found
More faith, who also in her prime of love,
Spousal embraces, vitiated with gold,
Though offer'd only, by the scent conceived
Her spurious first-born, treason against me?[61]
Thrice she assay'd with flattering prayers and sighs,
And amorous reproaches, to win from me
My capital secret;[62] in what part my strength

Lay stored, in what part summ'd, that she might know:
Thrice I deluded her, and turn'd to sport
Her importunity, each time perceiving
How openly, and with what impudence
She purposed to betray me; and (which was worse
Than undissembled hate) with what contempt
She sought to make me traitor to myself:
Yet the fourth time, when, mustering all her wiles,
With blandish'd parlies, feminine assaults,
Tongue-batteries,[63] she surceased not, day nor night,
To storm me overwatch'd, and wearied out,
At times when men seek most repose and rest,
I yielded, and unlock'd her all my heart,
Who, with a grain of manhood well resolved,
Might easily have shook off all her snares:
But foul effeminacy held me yoked
Her bond-slave; O indignity, O blot[64]
To honour and religion! servile mind
Rewarded well with servile punishment!
The base degree to which I now am fallen,
These rags, this grinding, is not yet so base
As was my former servitude, ignoble,
Unmanly, ignominious, infamous,
True slavery; and that blindness worse than this,
That saw not how degenerately I served.

MAN. I cannot praise thy marriage-choices, son,
Rather approved them not; but thou didst plead

Divine impulsion prompting how thou might'st
Find some occasion to infest our fo[illegible]
I state not that; this I am sure, ou[illegible]
Found soon occasion thereby to ma[illegible]
Their captive, and their triumph; thou the sooner
Temptation found'st, or over-potent charms,
To violate the sacred trust of silence
Deposited within thee; which to have kept
Tacit, was in thy power: true; and thou bear'st
Enough, and more, the burden of that fault;
Bitterly hast thou paid, and still art paying,
That rigid score. A worse thing yet remains:
This day the Philistines a popular feast[65]
Here celebrate in Gaza; and proclaim
Great pomp, and sacrifice, and praises loud,
To Dagon, as their god, who hath deliver'd
Thee, Samson, bound and blind into their hands,
Them out of thine, who slew'st them many a slain.
So Dagon shall be magnified, and God,
Besides whom is no god, compared with idols,
Disglorified, blasphemed, and had in scorn
By the idolatrous rout amidst their wine;
Which to have come to pass by means of thee,
Samson, of all thy sufferings think the heaviest,
Of all reproach the most with shame that ever
Could have befallen thee and thy father's house.

Sam. Father, I do acknowledge and confess,
That I this honour, I this pomp, have brought
To Dagon, and advanced his praises high
Among the heathen round; to God have brought
Dishonour, obloquy, and oped the mouths

Of idolists and atheists; have brought scandal
To Israel, diffidence of God, and doubt
In feeble hearts, propense enough before
To waver, or fall off and join with idols;
Which is my chief affliction, shame and sorrow,
The anguish of my soul, that suffers not
Mine eye to harbour sleep or thoughts to rest.
This only hope relieves me, that the strife
With me hath end; all the contest is now
'Twixt God and Dagon; Dagon hath presumed,
Me overthrown, to enter lists with God,
His deity comparing and preferring
Before the God of Abraham. He, be sure,
Will not connive or linger, thus provoked;
But will arise, and his great name assert:
Dagon must stoop, and shall ere long receive
Such a discomfit, as shall quite despoil him
Of all these boasted trophies won on me,
And with confusion blank his worshipers.[66]

MAN. With cause this hope relieves thee, and these words
I as a prophecy receive;[67] for God,
Nothing more certain, will not long defer
To vindicate the glory of his name
Against all competition, nor will long
Endure it doubtful whether God be Lord,
Or Dagon. But for thee what shall be done?
Thou must not in the meanwhile here forgot,
Lie in this miserable loathsome plight,
Neglected. I already have made way
To some Philistian lords, with whom to treat
About thy ransom: well they may by this
Have satisfied their utmost of revenge

By pains and slaveries, worse than death, inflicted
On thee, who now no more canst do them harm.
SAM. Spare that proposal, father; spare the trouble
Of that solicitation; let me here,
As I deserve, pay on my punishment;
And expiate, if possible, my crime,
Shameful garrulity. To have reveal'd
Secrets of men, the secrets of a friend,
How heinous had the fact been, how deserving
Contempt, and scorn of all, to be excluded
All friendship, and avoided as a blab,
The mark of fool set on his front! But I
God's counsel have not kept, his holy secret
Presumptuously have publish'd, impiously,
Weakly at least, and shamefully; a sin
That Gentiles in their parables condemn[68]
To their abyss and horrid pains confined.
MAN. Be penitent, and for thy fault contrite;
But act not in thy own affliction, son;
Repent the sin; but, if the punishment
Thou canst avoid, self-preservation bids;
Or the execution leave to high disposal,
And let another hand, not thine, exact
Thy penal forfeit from thyself: perhaps
God will relent, and quit thee all his debt;
Who ever more approves, and more accepts,
(Best pleased with humble and filial submission)
Him, who, imploring mercy, sues for life,
Than who, self-rigorous, chooses death as due;
Which argues over-just, and self-displeased
For self offence, more than for God offended.

Reject not then what offer'd means,[69] who knows
But God hath set before us, to return thee
Home to thy country and his sacred house,
Where thou mayst bring thy offerings, to avert
His farther ire, with prayers and vows renew'd?

Sam. His pardon I implore; but as for life,
To what end should I seek it? when in strength
All mortals I excell'd, and great in hopes,
With youthful courage, and magnanimous thoughts
Of birth from Heaven foretold, and high exploits,
Full of divine instinct, after some proof
Of acts indeed heroick, far beyond
The sons of Anak, famous now and blazed;
Fearless of danger, like a petty god
I walk'd about admired of all, and dreaded
On hostile ground, none daring my affront;
Then swollen with pride, into the snare I fell
Of fair fallacious looks, venereal trains,[70]
Soften'd with pleasure and voluptuous life;
At length to lay my head[71] and hallow'd pledge
Of all my strength in the lascivious lap
Of a deceitful concubine, who shore me,
Like a tame wether, all my precious fleece;
Then turn'd me out ridiculous, despoil'd,
Shaven, and disarm'd among mine enemies.

Cho. Desire of wine, and all delicious drinks,
Which many a famous warriour overturns,
Thou couldst repress; nor did the dancing ruby,[72]
Sparkling, out-pour'd, the flavour, or the smell,
Or taste that cheers the heart of gods and men,[73]

Allure thee from the cool crystalline stream.[74]
Sam. Wherever fountain or fresh current flow'd
Against the eastern ray,[75] translucent, pure
With touch ethereal of Heaven's fiery rod,[76]
I drank, from the clear milky juice allaying
Thirst, and refresh'd; nor envied them the grape,
Whose heads that turbulent liquor fills with fumes.
Cho. O, madness, to think use of strongest wines
And strongest drinks our chief support of health,
When God with these forbidden made choice to rear
His mighty champion, strong above compare,
Whose drink[77] was only from the liquid brook.
Sam. But what avail'd this temperance, not complete
Against another object more enticing?
What boots it at one gate to make defence,
And at another to let in the foe,
Effeminately vanquish'd? by which means,
Now blind, dishearten'd, shamed, dishonour'd, quell'd,
To what can I be useful, wherein serve
My nation, and the work from Heaven imposed,
But to sit idle on the household hearth,[78]
A burdenous drone; to visitants a gaze,
Or pitied object; these redundant locks,
Robustious to no purpose, clustering down,
Vain monument of strength; till length of years
And sedentary numness craze my limbs[79]

To a contemptible old age obscure?
Here rather let me drudge and earn my bread;
Till vermin, or the draff[80] of servile food,
Consume me, and oft-invocated death
Hasten the welcome end of all my pains.

MAN. Wilt thou then serve the Philistines with that gift
Which was expressly given thee to annoy them?
Better at home lie bed-rid, not only idle,
Inglorious, unemploy'd, with age outworn.
But God, who caused a fountain at thy prayer
From the dry ground to spring,[81] thy thirst to allay
After the brunt of battel; can as easy
Cause light again within thy eyes to spring,
Wherewith to serve him better than thou hast;
And I persuade me so: why else this strength
Miraculous yet remaining in those locks?
His might continues[82] in thee not for naught,
Nor shall his wondrous gifts be frustrate thus.

SAM. All otherwise to me my thoughts portend,
That these dark orbs no more shall treat with light,
Nor the other light of life continue long,
But yield to double darkness nigh at hand:
So much I feel my genial spirits droop,[83]
My hopes all flat, Nature within me seems
In all her functions weary of herself;
My race of glory run, and race of shame;
And I shall shortly be with them that rest.

MAN. Believe not these suggestions, which proceed
From anguish of the mind and humours black,
That mingle with thy fancy.[84] I however
Must not omit[85] a father's timely care
To prosecute the means of thy deliverance
By ransom, or how else: meanwhile be calm,
And healing words from these thy friends admit.
[*Exit.*

SAM. O, that torment should not be confined[86]
To the body's wounds and sores,
With maladies innumerable
In heart, head, breast, and reins;
But must secret passage find
To the inmost mind,
There exercise all his fierce accidents,
And on her purest spirits prey,
As on entrails, joints, and limbs,
With answerable pains, but more intense,
Though void of corporal sense.
My griefs not only pain me
As a lingering disease,
But, finding no redress, ferment and rage;
Nor less than wounds immedicable
Rankle, and fester, and gangrene,
To black mortification.
Thoughts, my tormentors, arm'd with deadly stings,
Mangle[87] my apprehensive tenderest parts,
Exasperate, exulcerate, and raise
Dire inflammation, which no cooling herb
Or med'cinal liquor[88] can asswage,

Nor breath of vernal air[89] from snowy Alp.[90]
Sleep hath forsook and given me o'er
To death's benumming opium as my only cure:
Thence faintings, swoonings of despair,
And sense of Heaven's desertion.
I was his nursling once,[91] and choice delight,
His destined from the womb,
Promised by heavenly message twice descending.
Under his special eye
Abstemious I grew up, and thrived amain:
He led me on to mightiest deeds,
Above the nerve of mortal arm,
Against the uncircumcised, our enemies:
But now hath cast me off as never known,
And to those cruel enemies,
Whom I by his appointment had provoked,
Left me all helpless, with the irreparable loss
Of sight, reserved alive to be repeated
The subject of their cruelty or scorn.
Nor am I in the list of them that hope:
Hopeless are all my evils, all remediless:
This one prayer yet remains, might I be heard,
No long petition; speedy death,
The close of all my miseries, and the balm.
Cho. Many are the sayings of the wise,
In ancient and in modern books inroll'd,
Extolling patience as the truest fortitude;
And to the bearing well of all calamities,
All chances incident to man's frail life,
Consolatories writ
With studied argument, and much persuasion sought,[92]

Lenient of grief[93] and anxious thought:
But with the afflicted in his pangs their sound
Little prevails, or rather seems a tune
Harsh, and of dissonant mood[94] from his complaint;
Unless he feel within
Some source of consolation from above,
Secret refreshings, that repair his strength,
And fainting spirits uphold.
God of our fathers, what is man![95]
That thou toward him with hand so various,
Or might I say contrarious,[96]
Temper'st thy providence through his short course,
Not evenly, as thou rulest
The angelick orders, and inferiour creatures mute,
Irrational and brute?
Nor do I name of men the common rout,
That, wandering loose about,
Grow up and perish, as the summer-fly,
Heads without name, no more remember'd;[97]
But such as thou hast solemnly elected,
With gifts and graces eminently adorn'd,
To some great work, thy glory,
And people's safety, which in part they effect:
Yet toward these thus dignified, thou oft,
Amidst their highth of noon,[98]
Changest thy countenance, and thy hand, with no regard
Of highest favours past
From thee on them, or them to thee of service.
Nor only dost degrade them, or remit
To life obscured, which were a fair dismission;

But throw'st them lower than thou didst exalt them high;
Unseemly falls in human eye,
Too grievous for the trespass or omission;
Oft leavest them to the hostile sword
Of heathen and profane, their carcasses
To dogs and fowls a prey,[99] or else captived;
Or to the unjust tribunals, under change of times,[100]
And condemnation of the ingrateful multitude.
If these they 'scape, perhaps in poverty
With sickness and disease thou bow'st them down,
Painful diseases and deform'd,
In crude old age;[101]
Though not disordinate, yet causeless suffering
The punishment of dissolute days: in fine,
Just or unjust, alike seem miserable,
For oft alike both come to evil end.[102]

So deal not with this once thy glorious champion,
The image of thy strength, and mighty minister.
What do I beg? how hast thou dealt already!
Behold him in this state calamitous, and turn
His labours, for thou canst, to peaceful end.[103]

But who is this, what thing of sea or land?
Female of sex it seems,
That so bedeck'd, ornate, and gay,
Comes this way sailing
Like a stately ship[104]
Of Tarsus,[105] bound for the isles
Of Javan or Gadier
With all her bravery on, and tackle trim,
Sails fill'd,[106] and streamers waving,

Courted by all the winds[107] that hold them play,
An amber scent of odorous perfume
Her harbinger, a damsel train behind:
Some rich Philistian matron she may seem;
And now, at nearer view, no other certain
Than Dalila thy wife.

Sam. My wife! my traitress: let her not come near me.

Cho. Yet on she moves,[108] now stands and eyes thee fix'd,
About to have spoke; but now, with head declined,
Like a fair flower[109] surcharged with dew, she weeps,
And words address'd seem into tears dissolved,
Wetting the borders of her silken veil:
But now again she makes address to speak.

Enter Dalila.

Dal. With doubtful feet[110] and wavering resolution
I came, still dreading thy displeasure, Samson;
Which to have merited, without excuse,
I cannot but acknowledge; yet, if tears
May expiate, (though the fact more evil drew
In the perverse event than I foresaw)
My penance hath not slacken'd, though my pardon
No way assured. But conjugal affection,
Prevailing over fear and timorous doubt,
Hath led me on, desirous to behold
Once more thy face, and know of thy estate,
If aught in my ability may serve

To lighten what thou suffer'st, and appease
Thy mind with what amends is in my power,
Though late, yet in some part to recompense
My rash, but more unfortunate misdeed.

Sam. Out, out, hyæna![111] these are thy wonted arts,
And arts of every woman false like thee,
To break all faith, all vows, deceive, betray,
Then as repentant to submit, beseech,
And reconcilement move with feign'd remorse,
Confess, and promise wonders in her change;
Not truly penitent, but chief to try
Her husband, how far urged his patience bears,
His virtue or weakness which way to assail:
Then with more cautious and instructed skill
Again transgresses, and again submits;
That wisest and best men, full oft beguiled,
With goodness[112] principled not to reject
The penitent, but ever to forgive,
Are drawn to wear out miserable days,[113]
Entangled with a poisonous bosom snake,
If not by quick destruction soon cut off,
As I by thee, to ages an example.

Dal. Yet hear me, Samson; not that I endeavour
To lessen or extenuate my offence;
But that, on the other side, if it be weigh'd
By itself, with aggravations not surcharged,
Or else with just allowance counterpoised,
I may, if possible, thy pardon find
The easier towards me, or thy hatred less.
First granting, as I do, it was a weakness

In me, but incident to all our sex,
Curiosity, inquisitive, importune
Of secrets, then with like infirmity
To publish them, both common female faults;
Was it not weakness also to make known
For importunity, that is, for naught,
Wherein consisted all thy strength and safety?
To what I did thou show'dst me first the way.
But I to enemies reveal'd, and should not:
Nor shouldst thou have trusted that to woman's frailty:
Ere I to thee, thou to thyself wast cruel.
Let weakness then with weakness come to parle,
So near related, or the same of kind,
Thine forgive mine; that men may censure thine
The gentler, if severely thou exact not
More strength from me than in thyself was found.
And what if love, which thou interpret'st hate,
The jealousy of love, powerful of sway
In human hearts, nor less in mine towards thee,
Caused what I did? I saw thee mutable
Of fancy, fear'd lest one day thou wouldst leave me
As her at Timna, sought by all means therefore
How to endear, and hold thee to me firmest:
No better way I saw than by importuning
To learn thy secrets, get into my power
Thy key of strength and safety: thou wilt say,
Why then reveal'd? I was assured by those
Who tempted me, that nothing was design'd
Against thee but safe custody, and hold:
That made for me; I knew that liberty

Would draw thee forth to perilous enterprises,
While I at home sat full of cares and fears,
Wailing thy absence in my widow'd bed:
Here I should still enjoy thee, day and night,
Mine and love's prisoner,[114] not the Philistines';
Whole to myself, unhazarded abroad,
Fearless at home of partners in my love.
These reasons in love's law have pass'd for good,
Though fond and reasonless to some perhaps;
And love hath oft, well meaning, wrought much woe,
Yet always pity or pardon hath obtain'd.
Be not unlike all others, not austere
As thou art strong, inflexible as steel.
If thou in strength all mortals dost exceed,
In uncompassionate anger do not so.

SAM. How cunningly the sorceress displays
Her own transgressions, to upbraid me mine!
That malice, not repentance, brought thee hither,
By this appears: I gave, thou say'st, the example;
I led the way: bitter reproach, but true:
I to myself was false ere thou to me;
Such pardon therefore as I give my folly,
Take to thy wicked deed;[115] which when thou seest
Impartial, self-severe, inexorable,
Thou wilt renounce thy seeking, and much rather
Confess it feign'd. Weakness is thy excuse,
And I believe it; weakness to resist
Philistian gold: if weakness may excuse,
What murderer, what traitor, parricide,
Incestuous, sacrilegious, but may plead it?

All wickedness is weakness: that plea therefore
With God or man will gain thee no remission.
But love constrain'd thee; call it furious rage
To satisfy thy lust: love seeks to have love;
My love how couldst thou hope, who took'st the way
To raise in me inexpiable hate,
Knowing, as needs I must, by thee betray'd?[116]
In vain thou strivest to cover shame with shame,
Or by evasions thy crime uncover'st more.

Dal. Since thou determinest weakness for no plea
In man or woman, though to thy own condemning,
Hear what assaults I had, what snares besides,
What sieges girt me round, ere I consented;
Which might have awed the best-resolved of men,
The constantest, to have yielded without blame.
It was not gold, as to my charge thou lay'st,
That wrought with me: thou know'st, the magistrates[117]
And princes of my country came in person,
Solicited, commanded, threaten'd, urged,
Adjured by all the bonds of civil duty
And of religion, press'd how just it was,
How honourable, how glorious, to entrap
A common enemy, who had destroy'd
Such numbers of our nation: and the priest
Was not behind,[118] but ever at my ear,
Preaching how meritorious with the gods
It would be to ensnare an irreligious
Dishonourer of Dagon: what had I
To oppose against such powerful arguments?

Only my love of thee held long debate,
And combated in silence all these reasons
With hard contest: at length, that grounded maxim,
So rife and celebrated in the mouths
Of wisest men, that—To the publick good
Private respects must yield—with grave authority
Took full possession of me, and prevail'd;
Virtue, as I thought, truth, duty, so enjoining.

Sam. I thought where all thy circling wiles would end;
In feign'd religion, smooth hypocrisy!
But had thy love, still odiously pretended,
Been, as it ought, sincere, it would have taught thee
Far other reasonings, brought forth other deeds.
I, before all the daughters of my tribe
And of my nation, chose thee from among
My enemies, loved thee, as too well thou knew'st;[119]
Too well; unbosom'd all my secrets to thee,
Not out of levity, but overpower'd
By thy request, who could deny thee nothing;
Yet now am judged an enemy. Why then
Didst thou at first receive me for thy husband,
Then, as since then, thy country's foe profess'd?
Being once a wife,[120] for me thou wast to leave
Parents and country; nor was I their subject,
Nor under their protection, but my own;
Thou mine, not theirs: if aught against my life
Thy country sought of thee, it sought unjustly,
Against the law of nature, law of nations;
No more thy country, but an impious crew
Of men conspiring to uphold their state

By worse than hostile deeds; violating the ends
For which our country is a name so dear;
Not therefore to be obey'd. But zeal moved thee;
To please thy gods thou didst it: gods unable
To acquit themselves and prosecute their foes
But by ungodly deeds, the contradiction
Of their own deity, gods cannot be;
Less therefore to be pleased, obey'd, or fear'd.
These false pretexts and varnish'd colours failing,[121]
Bare in thy guilt, how foul must thou appear!
DAL. In argument with men a woman ever
Goes by the worse, whatever be her cause.
SAM. For want of words no doubt, or lack of breath:
Witness when I was worried with thy peals.
DAL. I was a fool, too rash, and quite mistaken
In what I thought would have succeeded best.
Let me obtain forgiveness of thee, Samson;
Afford me place to show what recompense
Towards thee I intend for what I have misdone,
Misguided; only what remains past cure
Bear not too sensibly, nor still insist
To afflict thyself in vain: though sight be lost,[122]
Life yet hath many solaces, enjoy'd
Where other senses want not their delights
At home in leisure and domestick ease,
Exempt from many a care and chance, to which
Eye-sight exposes daily men abroad.
I to the lords will intercede, not doubting

Their favourable ear, that I may fetch thee
From forth this loathsome prison-house, to abide
With me, where my redoubled love and care
With nursing diligence, to me glad office,
May ever tend about thee to old age
With all things grateful cheer'd, and so supplied,
That, what by me thou hast lost, thou least shalt miss.

SAM. No, no; of my condition take no care;
It fits not; thou and I long since are twain:
Nor think me so unwary or accursed,
To bring my feet again into the snare
Where once I have been caught: I know thy trains,
Though dearly to my cost, thy gins, and toils:
Thy fair enchanted cup, and warbling charms,[123]
No more on me have power; their force is null'd;
So much of adder's wisdom I have learn'd,[124]
To fence my ear against thy sorceries.
If in my flower of youth and strength, when all men
Loved, honour'd, fear'd me, thou alone couldst hate me
Thy husband, slight me, sell me, and forego me;
How wouldst thou use me now, blind, and thereby
Deceivable, in most things as a child
Helpless, thence easily contemn'd, and scorn'd,
And last neglected! How wouldst thou insult,
When I must live uxorious to thy will
In perfect thraldom; how again betray me,
Bearing my words and doings to the lords
To gloss upon, and, censuring, frown or smile!

This jail I count the house of liberty
To thine, whose doors my feet shall never enter.
DAL. Let me approach at least, and touch thy hand.
SAM. Not for thy life, lest fierce remembrance wake
My sudden rage to tear thee joint by joint.[125]
At distance I forgive thee; go with that:
Bewail thy falsehood, and the pious works
It hath brought forth to make thee memorable
Among illustrious women, faithful wives!
Cherish thy hasten'd widowhood[126] with the gold
Of matrimonial treason!—so farewell.
DAL. I see thou art implacable, more deaf
To prayers than winds and seas; yet winds to seas
Are reconciled at length, and sea to shore:
Thy anger, unappeasable, still rages,
Eternal tempest, never to be calm'd.
Why do I humble thus myself, and, suing
For peace, reap nothing but repulse and hate;
Bid go with evil omen, and the brand
Of infamy upon my name denounced?
To mix with thy concernments I desist
Henceforth, nor too much disapprove my own.
Fame, if not double-faced, is double-mouth'd,
And with contrary blast proclaims most deeds;
On both his wings, one black, the other white,[127]
Bears greatest names in his wild aery flight.[128]
My name perhaps among the circumcised
In Dan, in Judah, and the bordering tribes,
To all posterity may stand defamed,

With malediction mention'd, and the blot
Of falsehood most unconjugal traduced:
But in my country, where I most desire,
In Ecron, Gaza, Asdod, and in Gath,
I shall be named [129] among the famousest
Of women, sung at solemn festivals,
Living and dead recorded, who, to save
Her country from a fierce destroyer, chose
Above the faith of wedlock-bands; my tomb
With odours visited and annual flowers; [130]
Not less renown'd than in mount Ephraim
Jael, [131] who with inhospitable guile
Smote Sisera sleeping, through the temples nail'd.
Nor shall I count it heinous to enjoy
The publick marks of honour and reward,
Conferr'd upon me for the piety,
Which to my country I was judged to have shown.
At this whoever envies or repines, [132]
I leave him to his lot, and like my own. [*Exit.*

Cho. She 's gone, a manifest serpent by her sting, [133]
Discover'd in the end, till now conceal'd.

Sam. So let her go; God sent her to debase me,
And aggravate my folly, who committed
To such a viper his most sacred trust
Of secresy, my safety and my life.

Cho. Yet beauty, though injurious, hath strange power, [134]
After offence returning, to regain
Love once possess'd, nor can be easily

Repulsed, without much inward passion felt,
And secret sting of amorous remorse.
SAM. Love-quarrels oft in pleasing concord end,[135]
Not wedlock treachery endangering life.
CHO. It is not virtue,[136] wisdom, valour, wit,
Strength, comeliness of shape, or amplest merit,
That woman's love can win or long inherit;
But what it is, hard is to say,
Harder to hit,
Which way soever men refer it;
Much like thy riddle, Samson, in one day
Or seven, though one should musing sit.
If any of these, or all, the Timnian bride
Had not so soon preferr'd
Thy paranymph,[137] worthless to thee compared,
Successour in thy bed,
Nor both so loosely disallied
Their nuptials, nor this last so treacherously
Had shorn the fatal harvest of thy head.
Is it for that such outward ornament
Was lavish'd on their sex, that inward gifts
Were left for haste unfinish'd, judgement scant,
Capacity not raised to apprehend
Or value what is best
In choice, but oftest to affect the wrong?
Or was too much of self-love mix'd,
Of constancy no root infix'd,
That either they love nothing, or not long?
Whate'er it be, to wisest men and best[138]
Seeming at first all heavenly under virgin veil,[139]
Soft, modest, meek, demure,

Once join'd, the contrary she proves, a thorn
Intestine, far within defensive arms
A cleaving mischief,[140] in his way to virtue
Adverse and turbulent, or by her charms
Draws him awry enslaved
With dotage, and his sense depraved
To folly and shameful deeds, which ruin ends.
What pilot so expert but needs must wreck,
Imbark'd with such a steers-mate at the helm?
Favour'd of Heaven, who finds[141]
One virtuous, rarely found,
That in domestick good combines;
Happy that house! his way to peace is smooth:
But virtue, which breaks through all opposition,
And all temptation can remove,
Most shines, and most is acceptable above.
Therefore God's universal law
Gave to the man despotick power
Over his female in due awe,
Nor from that right to part an hour,
Smile she or lour:
So shall he least confusion draw
On his whole life, not sway'd
By female usurpation, nor dismay'd.

But had we best retire? I see a storm.

Sam. Fair days have oft contracted wind and rain.

Cho. But this another kind of tempest brings.

Sam. Be less abstruse; my riddling days are past.

Cho. Look now for no enchanting voice, nor fear

The bait of honied words; a rougher tongue
Draws hitherward; I know him by his stride,
The giant Harapha of Gath, his look
Haughty, as is his pile high-built and proud.
Comes he in peace? what wind hath blown him hither
I less conjecture than when first I saw
The sumptuous Dalila floating this way:
His habit carries peace, his brow defiance.

SAM. Or peace or not, alike to me he comes.

CHO. His fraught we soon shall know: he now arrives.

Enter HARAPHA.

HAR. I come not, Samson, to condole thy chance,
As these perhaps, yet wish it had not been,
Though for no friendly intent. I am of Gath;
Men call me Harapha,[142] of stock renown'd
As Og, or Anak, and the Emims old
That Kiriathaim held: thou know'st me now,
If thou at all art known.[143] Much I have heard
Of thy prodigious might and feats perform'd,
Incredible to me, in this displeased,
That I was never present on the place
Of those encounters, where we might have tried
Each other's force in camp or listed field;
And now am come to see of whom such noise
Hath walk'd about, and each limb to survey,
If thy appearance answer loud report.

SAM. The way to know were not to see, but taste.

HAR. Dost thou already single me? I thought
Gyves[144] and the mill had tamed thee. O, that fortune
Had brought me to the field, where thou art famed
To have wrought such wonders with an ass's jaw!
I should have forced thee soon wish other arms,
Or left thy carcass where the ass lay thrown:
So had the glory of prowess been recover'd
To Palestine, won by a Philistine
From the unforeskinn'd race, of whom thou bear'st
The highest name for valiant acts: that honour,
Certain to have won by mortal duel from thee,
I lose, prevented by thy eyes put out.

SAM. Boast not of what thou wouldst have done, but do
What then thou wouldst; thou seest it in thy hand.

HAR. To combat with a blind man I disdain;
And thou hast need much washing to be touch'd.

SAM. Such usage as your honourable lords
Afford me, assassinated and betray'd,
Who durst not with their whole united powers
In fight withstand me single and unarm'd,
Nor in the house with chamber-ambushes
Close-banded durst attack me, no, not sleeping,
Till they had hired a woman with their gold,
Breaking her marriage faith, to circumvent me.
Therefore, without feign'd shifts, let be assign'd
Some narrow place enclosed, where sight may give thee,

Or rather flight,[145] no great advantage on me;
Then put on all thy gorgeous arms, thy helmet
And brigandine of brass,[146] thy broad habergeon,
Vant-brace, and greves, and gauntlet; add thy spear,
A weaver's beam,[147] and seven-times-folded shield:[148]
I only with an oaken staff will meet thee,
And raise such outcries on thy clatter'd iron,
Which long shall not withhold me from thy head,
That in a little time, while breath remains thee,
Thou oft shalt wish thyself at Gath, to boast
Again in safety what thou wouldst have done
To Samson, but shalt never see Gath more.

Har. Thou durst not thus disparage glorious arms,
Which greatest heroes have in battle worn,
Their ornament and safety, had not spells
And black enchantments, some magician's art,
Arm'd thee or charm'd thee strong,[149] which thou from Heaven
Feign'dst at thy birth was given thee in thy hair,
Where strength can least abide, though all thy hairs
Were bristles ranged like those that ridge the back
Of chafed wild boars, or ruffled porcupines.[150]

Sam. I know no spells, use no forbidden arts:
My trust is in the Living God, who gave me
At my nativity this strength, diffused
No less through all my sinews, joints, and bones,

Than thine, while I preserved these locks unshorn,
The pledge of my unviolated vow.
For proof hereof, if Dagon be thy god,
Go to his temple, invocate his aid
With solemnest devotion, spread before him
How highly it concerns his glory now
To frustrate and dissolve these magick spells,
Which I to be the power of Israel's God
Avow, and challenge Dagon to the test,
Offering to combat thee his champion bold,
With the utmost of his godhead seconded:
Then thou shalt see, or rather, to thy sorrow,
Soon feel, whose God is strongest, thine or mine.

HAR. Presume not on thy God, whate'er he be;
Thee he regards not, owns not, hath cut off
Quite from his people, and deliver'd up
Into thy enemies' hand, permitted them
To put out both thine eyes, and fetter'd send thee
Into the common prison, there to grind
Among the slaves and asses, thy comrades,[151]
As good for nothing else; no better service
With those thy boisterous locks, no worthy match
For valour to assail, nor by the sword
Of noble warriour, so to stain his honour,
But by the barber's razor best subdued.

SAM. All these indignities, for such they are
From thine, these evils I deserve, and more,
Acknowledge them from God inflicted on me
Justly, yet despair not of his final pardon,
Whose ear is ever open, and his eye
Gracious to re-admit the suppliant:

In confidence whereof I once again
Defy thee to the trial of mortal fight,
By combat to decide whose god is God,
Thine, or whom I with Israel's sons adore.
HAR. Fair honour that thou dost thy God, in trusting
He will accept thee to defend his cause,
A murderer, a revolter, and a robber!
SAM. Tongue-doughty giant, how dost thou prove me these?
HAR. Is not thy nation subject to our lords?
Their magistrates confess'd it, when they took thee
As a league-breaker, and deliver'd bound
Into our hands: for hadst thou not committed
Notorious murder on those thirty men
At Ascalon, who never did thee harm,
Then like a robber stripp'dst them of their robes?
The Philistines, when thou hadst broke the league,
Went up with armed powers thee only seeking,
To others did no violence nor spoil.
SAM. Among the daughters of the Philistines
I chose a wife, which argued me no foe;
And in your city held my nuptial feast:
But your ill-meaning politician lords,
Under pretence of bridal friends[152] and guests,
Appointed to await me thirty spies,
Who, threatening cruel death, constrain'd the bride
To wring from me, and tell to them, my secret,
That solved the riddle which I had proposed.
When I perceived all set on enmity,
As on my enemies, wherever chanced,

I used hostility, and took their spoil,
To pay my underminers in their coin.
My nation was subjected to your lords;
It was the force of conquest: force with force
Is well ejected when the conquer'd can.
But I, a private person, whom my country
As a league-breaker gave up bound, presumed
Single rebellion, and did hostile acts.
I was no private, but a person raised
With strength sufficient, and command from Heaven,
To free my country: if their servile minds
Me, their deliverer sent, would not receive,
But to their masters gave me up for naught,
The unworthier they; whence to this day they serve.
I was to do my part from Heaven assign'd,
And had perform'd it, if my known offence
Had not disabled me, not all your force:
These shifts refuted, answer thy appellant,[153]
Though by his blindness maim'd for high attempts,
Who now defies thee thrice[154] to single fight,
As a petty enterprise of small enforce.

HAR. With thee? a man condemn'd, a slave inroll'd,
Due by the law to capital punishment?
To fight with thee no man of arms will deign.

SAM. Camest thou for this, vain boaster, to survey me,
To descant on my strength, and give thy verdict?
Come nearer; part not hence so slight inform'd;
But take good heed my hand survey not thee.

HAR. O Baal-zebub![155] can my ears unused
Hear these dishonours, and not render death?
SAM. No man withholds thee, nothing from thy hand
Fear I incurable; bring up thy van:
My heels are fetter'd, but my fist is free.
HAR. This insolence other kind of answer fits.
SAM. Go, baffled coward! lest I run upon thee,
Though in these chains, bulk without spirit vast,
And with one buffet lay thy structure low,
Or swing thee in the air, then dash thee down
To the hazard of thy brains and shatter'd sides.
HAR. By Astaroth, ere long thou shalt lament
These braveries,[156] in irons loaden on thee. [*Exit.*
CHO. His giantship is gone somewhat crest-fallen,
Stalking with less unconscionable strides,
And lower looks, but in a sultry chafe.
SAM. I dread him not, nor all his giant brood,
Though Fame divulge him father of five sons,[157]
All of gigantick size, Goliath chief.
CHO. He will directly to the lords, I fear,
And with malicious counsel stir them up
Some way or other yet farther to afflict thee.
SAM. He must allege some cause, and offer'd fight
Will not dare mention, lest a question rise
Whether he durst accept the offer or not;
And, that he durst not, plain enough appear'd.
Much more affliction than already felt
They cannot well impose, nor I sustain;
If they intend advantage of my labours,

The work of many hands, which earns my keeping
With no small profit daily to my owners.
But come what will, my deadliest foe will prove
My speediest friend, by death to rid me hence;
The worst that he can give, to me the best.
Yet so it may fall out, because their end
Is hate, not help to me, it may with mine
Draw their own ruin who attempt the deed.

Cho. O, how comely it is, and how reviving
To the spirits of just men long oppress'd,
When God into the hands of their deliverer
Puts invincible might
To quell the mighty of the earth, the oppressour,
The brute and boisterous force of violent men,
Hardy and industrious to support
Tyrannick power, but raging to pursue
The righteous, and all such as honour truth!
He all their ammunition
And feats of war defeats,
With plain heroick magnitude of mind
And celestial vigour arm'd;
Their armouries and magazines contemns,
Renders them useless; while
With winged expedition,
Swift as the lightning glance, he executes
His errand on the wicked, who, surprised,
Lose their defence, distracted and amazed.

But patience is more oft the exercise
Of saints,[158] the trial of their fortitude,
Making them each his own deliverer,
And victor over all
That tyranny or fortune can inflict.

Either of these is in thy lot,
Samson, with might endued
Above the sons of men; but sight bereaved
May chance to number thee with those
Whom patience finally must crown.
This idol's day hath been to thee no day of rest,
Labouring thy mind
More than the working day thy hands.
And yet perhaps more trouble is behind,
For I descry this way
Some other tending; in his hand
A sceptre or quaint staff he bears,
Comes on amain, speed in his look.
By his habit I discern him now
A publick officer, and now at hand:
His message will be short and voluble.

Enter OFFICER.

OFF. Hebrews, the prisoner Samson here I seek.
CHO. His manacles remark him; there he sits.
OFF. Samson, to thee our lords thus bid me say:
This day to Dagon is a solemn feast,
With sacrifices, triumph, pomp, and games:
Thy strength they know surpassing human rate,
And now some publick proof thereof require
To honour this great feast and great assembly:
Rise therefore with all speed, and come along,
Where I will see thee hearten'd, and fresh clad,
To appear, as fits, before the illustrious lords.
SAM. Thou know'st I am an Hebrew, therefore tell them,

Our law forbids at their religious rites
My presence; for that cause I cannot come.
Off. This answer, be assured, will not content them.
Sam. Have they not sword-players, and every sort
Of gymnick artists, wrestlers, riders, runners,
Jugglers, and dancers, anticks, mummers, mimicks,
But they must pick me out, with shackles tired,
And over-labour'd at their publick mill,
To make them sport with blind activity?
Do they not seek occasion of new quarrels
On my refusal to distress me more,
Or make a game of my calamities?
Return the way thou camest; I will not come.
Off. Regard thyself; this will offend them highly.
Sam. Myself? my conscience, and internal peace.
Can they think me so broken, so debased
With corporal servitude, that my mind ever
Will condescend to such absurd commands?
Although their drudge, to be their fool or jester,
And in my midst of sorrow and heart-grief
To show them feats, and play before their god,
The worst of all indignities, yet on me
Join'd with extreme contempt? I will not come.
Off. My message was imposed on me with speed,
Brooks no delay: is this thy resolution?
Sam. So take it with what speed thy message needs.

Off. I am sorry what this stoutness will produce. [*Exit.*

Sam. Perhaps thou shalt have cause to sorrow indeed.[159]

Cho. Consider, Samson; matters now are strain'd
Up to the highth, whether to hold or break:
He 's gone, and who knows how he may report
Thy words by adding fuel to the flame?
Expect another message more imperious,
More lordly thundering than thou well wilt bear.

Sam. Shall I abuse this consecrated gift
Of strength, again returning with my hair
After my great transgression; so requite
Favour renew'd, and add a greater sin
By prostituting holy things to idols?
A Nazarite in place abominable
Vaunting my strength in honour to their Dagon!
Besides, how vile, contemptible, ridiculous!
What act more execrably unclean, profane?

Cho. Yet with this strength thou servest the Philistines,
Idolatrous, uncircumcised, unclean.

Sam. Not in their idol-worship, but by labour
Honest and lawful to deserve my food
Of those, who have me in their civil power.

Cho. Where the heart joins not, outward acts defile not.

Sam. Where outward force constrains, the sentence holds.
But who constrains me to the temple of Dagon,
Not dragging? the Philistian lords command.

Commands are no constraints. If I obey them,
I do it freely, venturing to displease
God for the fear of man, and man prefer,
Set God behind: which in his jealousy
Shall never, unrepented, find forgiveness.
Yet that he may dispense[160] with me, or thee,
Present in temples at idolatrous rites
For some important cause, thou need'st not doubt.

Cho. How thou wilt here come off surmounts my reach.

Sam. Be of good courage; I begin to feel
Some rousing motions in me, which dispose
To something extraordinary my thoughts.
I with this messenger will go along,[161]
Nothing to do, be sure, that may dishonour
Our law, or stain my vow of Nazarite.
If there be aught of presage in the mind,[162]
This day will be remarkable in my life
By some great act, or of my days the last.

Cho. In time thou hast resolved; the man returns.

Off. Samson, this second message from our lords
To thee I am bid say. Art thou our slave,
Our captive, at the publick mill our drudge,
And darest thou at our sending and command
Dispute thy coming? come without delay;
Or we shall find such engines to assail
And hamper thee, as thou shalt come of force,
Though thou wert firmlier fasten'd than a rock.

Sam. I could be well content to try their art,
Which to no few of them would prove pernicious:

Yet, knowing their advantages too many,
Because they shall not trail me through their streets
Like a wild beast, I am content to go.
Masters' commands[163] come with a power resistless
To such as owe them absolute subjection;
And for a life who will not change his purpose?
(So mutable are all the ways of men!)
Yet this be sure, in nothing to comply
Scandalous or forbidden in our law.

Off. I praise thy resolution: doff these links:
By this compliance thou wilt win the lords
To favour, and perhaps to set thee free.

Sam. Brethren, farewell; your company along
I will not wish, lest it perhaps offend them
To see me girt with friends; and how the sight
Of me, as of a common enemy,
So dreaded once, may now exasperate them,
I know not: lords are lordliest in their wine;[164]
And the well-feasted priest then soonest fired
With zeal, if aught religion seem concern'd;
No less the people, on their holy-days,
Impetuous, insolent, unquenchable:
Happen what may, of me expect to hear
Nothing dishonourable, impure, unworthy
Our God, our law, my nation, or myself,
The last of me or no I cannot warrant.

[*Exit, with the Officer.*

Cho. Go, and the Holy One[165]
Of Israel be thy guide
To what may serve his glory best, and spread his name

Great among the heathen round;
Send thee the angel of thy birth, to stand
Fast by thy side, who from thy father's field
Rode up in flames after his message told
Of thy conception, and be now a shield
Of fire; that spirit, that first rush'd on thee
In the camp of Dan,
Be efficacious in thee now at need!
For never was from Heaven imparted
Measure of strength so great to mortal seed,
As in thy wondrous actions hath been seen.
But wherefore comes old Manoah in such haste
With youthful steps? much livelier than erewhile
He seems; supposing here to find his son,
Or of him bringing to us some glad news?

Enter MANOAH.

MAN. Peace with you, brethren; my inducement hither
Was not at present here to find my son,
By order of the lords new parted hence
To come and play before them at their feast.
I heard all as I came; the city rings,
And numbers thither flock: I had no will,
Lest I should see him forced to things unseemly.
But that, which moved my coming now, was chiefly
To give ye part with me what hope I have
With good success to work his liberty.

CHO. That hope would much rejoice us to partake
With thee; say, reverend sire; we thirst to hear.

MAN. I have attempted one by one the lords
Either at home, or through the high street passing,
With supplication prone and father's tears,
To accept of ransom for my son their prisoner.
Some much averse I found and wondrous harsh,
Contemptuous, proud, set on revenge and spite;
That part most reverenced Dagon and his priests:[166]
Others more moderate seeming,[167] but their aim
Private reward, for which both God and state
They easily would set to sale: a third
More generous far and civil, who confess'd
They had enough revenged; having reduced
Their foe to misery beneath their fears,
The rest was magnanimity to remit,
If some convenient ransom were proposed.
What noise or shout was that? it tore the sky.[168]
CHO. Doubtless, the people shouting to behold
Their once great dread, captive and blind before them,
Or at some proof of strength before them shown.
MAN. His ransom, if my whole inheritance
May compass it, shall willingly be paid
And number'd down: much rather I shall choose
To live the poorest in my tribe, than richest,
And he in that calamitous prison left.
No, I am fix'd, not to part hence without him.
For his redemption all my patrimony,
If need be, I am ready to forego
And quit: not wanting him, I shall want nothing.

Cho. Fathers are wont to lay up for their sons,
Thou for thy son art bent to lay out all:
Sons wont to nurse their parents in old age,
Thou in old age carest how to nurse thy son,
Made older than thy age through eye-sight lost.
Man. It shall be my delight[169] to tend his eyes,
And view him sitting in the house ennobled
With all those high exploits by him achieved,
And on his shoulders waving down those locks,
That of a nation arm'd the strength contain'd;
And I persuade me, God had not permitted
His strength again to grow up with his hair,
Garrison'd round about him like a camp
Of faithful soldiery; were not his purpose
To use him farther yet in some great service;
Not to sit idle with so great a gift
Useless, and thence ridiculous, about him.
And since his strength with eye-sight was not lost,
God will restore him eye-sight to his strength.
Cho. Thy hopes are not ill founded, nor seem vain
Of his delivery,[170] and thy joy thereon
Conceived, agreeable to a father's love,
In both which we, as next, participate.
Man. I know your friendly minds, and—O, what noise![171]
Mercy of Heaven! what hideous noise was that?
Horribly loud, unlike the former shout.
Cho. Noise call you it, or universal groan,
As if the whole inhabitation[172] perish'd!

Blood, death, and deathful deeds are in that noise,
Ruin, destruction at the utmost point.
MAN. Of ruin indeed methought I heard the noise:
O! it continues: they have slain my son.
CHO. Thy son is rather slaying them; that outcry
From slaughter of one foe could not ascend.
MAN. Some dismal accident it needs must be:
What shall we do; stay here, or run and see?
CHO. Best keep together here, lest,[173] running thither,
We unawares run into danger's mouth.
This evil on the Philistines is fallen;
From whom could else a general cry be heard?
The sufferers then will scarce molest us here;
From other hands we need not much to fear.
What if, his eye-sight[174] (for to Israel's God
Nothing is hard) by miracle restored,
He now be dealing dole among his foes,
And over heaps of slaughter'd walk his way?
MAN. That were a joy presumptuous to be thought.
CHO. Yet God hath wrought things as incredible
For his people of old; what hinders now?
MAN. He can, I know, but doubt to think he will;
Yet hope would fain subscribe, and tempts belief.
A little stay will bring some notice hither.

CHO. Of good or bad so great, of bad the sooner;
For evil news rides post,[175] while good news baits:
And to our wish I see one hither speeding;
An Hebrew, as I guess, and of our tribe.

Enter MESSENGER.

MES. O, whither shall I run, or which way fly
The sight of this so horrid spectacle,
Which erst my eyes beheld, and yet behold?
For dire imagination still pursues me.
But providence or instinct of nature seems,
Or reason, though disturb'd, and scarce consulted,
To have guided me aright, I know not how,
To thee first, reverend Manoah, and to these
My countrymen, whom here I knew remaining,
As at some distance from the place of horrour,
So in the sad event too much concern'd.

MAN. The accident was loud, and here before thee
With rueful cry, yet what it was we hear not:
No preface needs; thou seest we long to know.

MES. It would burst forth, but I recover breath
And sense distract, to know well what I utter.

MAN. Tell us the sum, the circumstance defer.

MES. Gaza yet stands, but all her sons are fallen,
All in a moment overwhelm'd and fallen.

MAN. Sad, but thou know'st to Israelites not saddest
The desolation of a hostile city.

Mes. Feed on that first: there may in grief be surfeit.

Man. Relate by whom.

Mes. By Samson.

Man. That still lessens
The sorrow, and converts it nigh to joy.

Mes. Ah! Manoah, I refrain[176] too suddenly
To utter what will come at last too soon;
Lest evil tidings, with too rude irruption
Hitting thy aged ear, should pierce too deep.

Man. Suspense in news is torture; speak them out.

Mes. Take then the worst in brief: Samson is dead.

Man. The worst indeed! O, all my hope's defeated
To free him hence! but death, who sets all free,
Hath paid his ransom now and full discharge.
What windy joy this day had I conceived
Hopeful of his delivery, which now proves
Abortive as the first-born bloom of spring,[177]
Nipp'd with the lagging rear of winter's frost!
Yet ere I give the reins to grief, say first,
How died he; death to life is crown or shame.
All by him fell, thou say'st; by whom fell he?
What glorious hand gave Samson his death's wound?

Mes. Unwounded of his enemies he fell.

Man. Wearied with slaughter then, or how? explain.

Mes. By his own hands.

Man. Self-violence? what cause

Brought him so soon at variance with himself
Among his foes?
MES. Inevitable cause,
At once both to destroy, and be destroy'd.
The edifice, where all were met to see him,
Upon their heads and on his own he pull'd.
MAN. O, lastly over-strong against thyself!
A dreadful way thou took'st to thy revenge.
More than enough we know; but while things yet
Are in confusion, give us, if thou canst,
Eye-witness of what first or last was done,
Relation more particular and distinct.
MES. Occasions drew me early to this city;[178]
And as the gates I enter'd with sunrise,
The morning trumpets festival proclaim'd
Through each high street: little I had despatch'd,
When all abroad was rumour'd that this day
Samson should be brought forth to show the people
Proof of his mighty strength in feats and games:
I sorrow'd at his captive state, but minded
Not to be absent at that spectacle.
The building was a spacious theatre
Half-round, on two main pillars vaulted high,[179]
With seats, where all the lords, and each degree
Of sort, might sit in order to behold;
The other side was open, where the throng
On banks and scaffolds under sky might stand;
I among these aloof obscurely stood.
The feast and noon grew high, and sacrifice
Had fill'd their hearts with mirth, high cheer, and wine,

When to their sports they turn'd. Immediately
Was Samson as a publick servant brought,
In their state livery clad; before him pipes
And timbrels, on each side went armed guards,
Both horse and foot, before him and behind,
Archers and slingers, cataphracts[180] and spears.
At sight of him, the people with a shout
Rifted the air, clamouring their god with praise,
Who had made their dreadful enemy their thrall.
He, patient, but undaunted, where they led him,
Came to the place; and what was set before him,
Which without help of eye might be assay'd,
To heave, pull, draw, or break, he still perform'd
All with incredible, stupendous force;
None daring to appear antagonist.
At length for intermission sake they led him
Between the pillars; he his guide requested
(For so from such as nearer stood we heard)
As over-tired to let him lean awhile
With both his arms on those two massy pillars,
That to the arched roof gave main support.[181]
He, unsuspicious, led him; which when Samson
Felt in his arms, with head awhile inclined,
And eyes fast fix'd he stood,[182] as one who pray'd,
Or some great matter in his mind revolved:
At last with head erect thus cried aloud:—
Hitherto, lords, what your commands imposed
I have perform'd, as reason was, obeying,
Not without wonder or delight beheld:
Now of my own accord such other trial
I mean to show you of my strength, yet greater,
As with amaze shall strike all who behold.[183]

This utter'd, straining all his nerves he bow'd:
As with the force of winds and waters pent,
When mountains tremble, those two massy pillars
With horrible convulsion to and fro
He tugg'd, he shook, till down they came, and drew
The whole roof after them, with burst of thunder
Upon the heads of all who sat beneath,
Lords, ladies, captains, counsellors, or priests,
Their choice nobility and flower, not only
Of this, but each Philistian city round,
Met from all parts to solemnize this feast.
Samson, with these immix'd, inevitably
Pull'd down the same destruction on himself;
The vulgar only 'scaped who stood without.

Cho. O dearly-bought revenge,[184] yet glorious!
Living or dying thou hast fulfill'd
The work for which thou wast foretold
To Israel, and now liest victorious
Among thy slain, self-kill'd,
Not willingly,[185] but tangled in the fold
Of dire necessity, whose law in death conjoin'd
Thee with thy slaughter'd foes in number more
Than all thy life had slain before.[186]

1. Semi. While their hearts were jocund and sublime,
Drunk with idolatry, drunk with wine,[187]
And fat regorged of bulls and goats,
Chanting their idol, and preferring
Before our Living Dread who dwells
In Silo,[188] his bright sanctuary;
Among them he a spirit of phrenzy sent,

Who hurt their minds,
And urged them on with mad desire,
To call in haste for their destroyer:
They, only set on sport and play,
Unweetingly importuned
Their own destruction to come speedy upon them.
So fond are mortal men,[189]
Fallen into wrath divine,
As their own ruin on themselves to invite,
Insensate left, or to sense reprobate,
And with blindness internal struck.

2. Semi. But he, though blind of sight,
Despised, and thought extinguish'd quite,
With inward eyes illuminated,
His fiery virtue roused
From under ashes into sudden flame,
And as an evening dragon came,[190]
Assailant on the perched roosts
And nests in order ranged
Of tame villatick fowl:[191] but as an eagle[192]
His cloudless thunder bolted on their heads.
So Virtue, given for lost,
Depress'd and overthrown, as seem'd,
Like that self-begotten bird[193]
In the Arabian woods embost,[194]
That no second knows nor third,
And lay erewhile a holocaust,[195]
From out her ashy womb now teem'd,
Revives, reflourishes, then vigorous most
When most unactive deem'd;
And, though her body die, her fame survives
A secular bird ages of lives.[196]

MAN. Come, come; no time for lamentation now,[197]
Nor much more cause; Samson hath quit himself
Like Samson, and heroickly hath finish'd
A life heroick; on his enemies
Fully revenged, hath left them years of mourning,
And lamentation to the sons of Caphtor[198]
Through all Philistian bounds; to Israel
Honour hath left, and freedom, let but them
Find courage to lay hold on this occasion;
To himself and father's house eternal fame;
And, which is best and happiest yet, all this
With God not parted from him, as was fear'd,
But favouring and assisting to the end.
Nothing is here for tears,[199] nothing to wail
Or knock the breast; no weakness, no contempt,
Dispraise, or blame; nothing but well and fair,
And what may quiet us in a death so noble.
Let us go find the body[200] where it lies
Soak'd in his enemies' blood; and from the stream,
With lavers pure and cleansing herbs, wash off
The clotted gore. I, with what speed the while,
(Gaza is not in plight to say us nay)
Will send for all my kindred, all my friends,[201]
To fetch him hence, and solemnly attend
With silent obsequy, and funeral train,
Home to his father's house; there will I build him
A monument, and plant it round with shade
Of laurel ever green, and branching palm,
With all his trophies hung,[202] and acts inroll'd
In copious legend, or sweet lyrick song.
Thither shall all the valiant youth resort,[203]

And from his memory inflame their breasts
To matchless valour, and adventures high:
The virgins also shall, on feastful days,
Visit his tomb with flowers; only bewailing
His lot unfortunate in nuptial choice,
From whence captivity and loss of eyes.
Cho. All is best, though we oft doubt[204]
What the unsearchable dispose
Of Highest Wisdom brings about,
And ever best found in the close.
Oft he seems to hide his face,
But unexpectedly returns,
And to his faithful champion hath in place
Bore witness gloriously; whence Gaza mourns,
And all that band them to resist
His uncontroulable intent:
His servants he, with new acquist
Of true experience, from this great event,
With peace and consolation hath dismiss'd,
And calm of mind, all passion spent.[205]

NOTES ON SAMSON AGONISTES.

---

[1] VERSE 1. *A little onward*, &c. Milton, after the example of the Greek tragedians, whom he professes to imitate, opens his drama with introducing one of its principal personages explaining the story upon which it is founded. —THYER.

The incident, however, and the formulary of the expression, are from the Hecuba of Euripides, who thus leads on the giant sorrows of Priam's aged queen :—

> HEC. Lead me, ye Trojan dames, a little onward,
> A little onward lead an aged matron,
> Now your poor fellow-slave, but once your queen.

[2] Ver. 2. *To these dark steps.* So Tiresias in Euripides, 'Phœnissæ,' ver. 841.—RICHARDSON.

The words of this opening are very poetical, beautiful, and affecting.

[3] Ver. 3. *For yonder bank.* The scene of this tragedy is much the same as that of the Œdipus Coloneus in Sophocles, where blind Œdipus is conducted in like manner, and represented sitting upon a little hill near Athens: but yet I think there is scarcely a single thought the same in the two

pieces; and I am sure the Greek tragedy can have no pretence to be esteemed better, but only because it is two thousand years older.—Newton.

[4] Ver. 10. *The breath of heaven.* This line and the next are exquisite.

[5] Ver. 13. *To Dagon their sea-idol.* Milton, as Dr. Newton observes, both here and in the 'Paradise Lost,' follows the opinion of those, who describe this idol as part man, part fish, b. i. 462. Some also describe the idol as part woman, and part fish:—

Desinat in piscem mulier formosa superne,

according to Calmet.—Todd.

[6] Ver. 21. *But rush upon me thronging.* The whole of this passage is pathetic, moral, and full of force.

[7] Ver. 22. *What once I was, and what am now.* As in 'Paradise Lost,' book iv. 23:—

Now conscience wakes despair
That slumber'd, wakes the bitter memory
Of what he was, what is. Todd.

[8] Ver. 24. *Twice by an angel.* Once to his mother, and again to his father Manoah and his mother both; and the second time the angel ascended in the flame of the altar, Judges xiii. 3. 11. 20.—Newton.

[9] Ver. 40. *Ask for this great deliverer now,* &c. This may be considered as political, referring to the prospects there were, not long before, of the republican party overturning monarchy; and to that lately victorious party being now completely itself overcome, and subject to the yoke which it had once apparently removed and trampled on.—Dunster.

[10] Ver. 53. *But what is strength without a double share Of wisdom?* &c.

Ovid, 'Met.' xiii. 363:—

Tu vires sine mente geris——
————tu tantum corpore prodes,
Nos animo: quantoque ratem qui temperat, &c.
JORTIN.

And Horace, Od. III. iv. 65:—

Vis consilî expers mole ruit sua. RICHARDSON.

[11] Ver. 79. *Scarce half I seem to live, dead more than half.* In these lines the poet seems to paint himself. The litigation of his will produced a collection of evidence relating to the testator, which renders the discovery of those long-forgotten papers peculiarly interesting: they show very forcibly, and in new points of view, his domestic infelicity, and his amiable disposition. The tender and sublime poet, whose sensibility and sufferings were so great, appears to have been almost as unfortunate in his daughters as the Lear of Shakspeare. A servant declares in evidence, that her deceased master, a little before his last marriage, had lamented to her the ingratitude and cruelty of his children: he complained that they combined to defraud him in the economy of his house, and sold several of his books in the basest manner. His feelings on such an outrage, both as a parent and a scholar, must have been singularly painful: perhaps they suggested to him these very pathetic lines.—HAYLEY.

As it appears, from the latest discoveries relating to the domestic life of Milton, that his wife was particularly attentive to him, and treated his infirmities with much tenderness, this passage seems to restrict the time when this drama was written to a period previous to his last marriage, or at least nearly to that immediate time, while the singular ill-treatment of his daughters was fresh in his memory. This also coincides with what Mr. Hayley has observed respecting its being written immediately after the execution of Sir

Henry Vane, which took place June 14, 1662. Milton was then in his fifty-fourth year, in which we are told he married his third wife. This would make the 'Agonistes' at least three years anterior to the 'Paradise Regained,' of which we know he had not thought previous to the summer of 1665; when, on account of the plague raging in London, he retired to Chalfont, where an accidental expression of Elwood, on returning him the copy of 'Paradise Lost,' laid the foundation of the second poem.—DUNSTER.

[12] Ver. 80. *O dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon, Irrecoverably dark.*

This is far more pathetic than the exclamation of Œdipus, which the poet perhaps had now in mind, 'Œd. Tyr.' v. 1337.—TODD.

Few passages in poetry are so affecting as this; and the tone of expression is peculiarly Miltonic.

[13] Ver. 87. *And silent as the moon.* "Silens luna" is the moon at or near the change, and in conjunction with the sun. Plin. lib. xvi. cap. 39. The interlunar cave is here called "vacant," "quia luna ibi vacat opere et ministerio suo;" because the moon is idle and useless, and makes no return of light.—MEADOWCOURT.

There is very extraordinary power of poetry in the whole passage, down to verse 109.

[14] Ver. 110. *With joint pace I hear The tread of many feet.*

Virgil, 'Æn.' ii. 731:—

subito cum creber ad aures
Visus adesse pedum sonitus. TODD.

[15] Ver. 111. *Steering this way.* If this be the right reading, the metaphor is extremely hard and abrupt. A common man would have said "bearing this way."—WARBURTON.

I believe "steering" is the right reading. So, in the 'Ode on the Nativ.' ver. 146:—

With radiant feet the tissued clouds down steering.

The old writers use it simply for moving. Thus Chaucer, in 'The Flower and the Leaf:'—

Stering so fast, that all the earth trembled. HURD.

[16] Ver. 118. *Carelessly diffused.* This beautiful application of the word "diffused" Milton has borrowed from the Latins. So Ovid, 'Ex Ponto,' III. iii. 7:—

Publica me requies curarum somnus habebat,
Fusaque erant toto languida membra toro. THYER.

[17] Ver. 131. *Made arms ridiculous.* This, it must be admitted, is prosaic.

[18] Ver. 133. *Chalybean tempper'd steel.* That is, the best tempered steel by the Chalybes, who were famous among the ancients for their iron works. Virg. 'Georg.' i. 58. "At Chalybes nudi ferrum."—NEWTON.

[19] Ver. 136. *When insupportably his foot advanced.* For this nervous expression Milton was probably indebted to the following lines of Spenser, 'Faery Queen,' i. vii. 11:—

That when the knight he spied, he 'gan advance
With huge force, and insupportable main. THYER.

[20] Ver. 138. *The bold Ascalonite.* The inhabitant of Ascalon, one of the five principal cities of the Philistines, mentioned 1 Sam. vi. 17.—NEWTON.

[21] Ver. 139. *His lion ramp.* His attack like that of a lion rampant. "Rampant" is an heraldic term.—T. WARTON.

[22] Ver. 139. *Old warriours turn'd*
Their plated backs, &c.

The deeds of valorous knights were now in Milton's mind. Artegall is thus described, "like a lion;"—

> Hewing and slashing shields and helmets bright,
> And beating downe whatever nigh him came,
> That every one 'gan shun his dreadful sight,
> No lesse than Death, &c.—'Faer. Qu.' iv. iv. 41.

See a similar account of Marinell, 'Faer. Qu.' v. iii. 8.—TODD.

[23] Ver. 141. *Crested helmets.* "Galeæ cristatæ quæ speciem magnitudini corporum adderent." Liv. ix. 40: and Ovid, 'Met.' viii. 25. "Cristata cassida."—DUNSTER.

[24] Ver. 145. *In Ramath-lechi, famous to this day.* Judges xv. 17. "He cast away the jaw-bone out of his hand, and called that place Ramath-lechi," that is, the lifting up of the jaw-bone, or casting away of the jaw-bone, as it is rendered in the margin of our Bibles.—NEWTON.

[25] Ver. 147. *The gates of Azza.* Another name for Gaza. Sandys, speaking of this city, says, "*Gaza* or *Aza* signifieth *strong*: in the Persian language, *a treasury*." Travels, fol. 1615, p. 149.—TODD.

[26] Ver. 148. *Hebron, seat of giants old.* "For Hebron was the city of Arba, the father of Anak, and the seat of the Anakims," Josh. xv. 13, 14. "And the Anakims were giants, which come of the giants," Numb. xiii. 33.—NEWTON.

[27] Ver. 158. *Imprison'd now indeed,*
In real darkness of the body dwells.

Perhaps an allusion to Matt. vi. 23. "If the light that

is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" So, in 'Comus;'—

> He, that hides a dark soul and foul thoughts,
> Benighted walks under the mid-day sun:
> Himself is his own dungeon. TODD.

[28] Ver. 162. *For inward light, alas!*
Puts forth no visual beam.
The expression is fine, and means the ray of light, which occasions vision.—WARBURTON.

[29] Ver. 164. *O mirrour of our fickle state*, &c. There is a fine resemblance in the remainder of these pathetic reflections to those of the Chorus, on the fate of Œdipus Tyrannus, in the play of that name by Sophocles, v. 1211.—TODD.

[30] Ver. 171. *Long descent of birth.* Juv. Sat. viii. 1:—

> quid prodest, Pontice, longo
> Sanguine censeri? TODD.

[31] Ver. 172. *Or the sphere of fortune.* Fortune is painted on a globe, which by her influence is in a perpetual rotation on its axis.—WARBURTON.

[32] Ver. 175. *Highest praises.* Though there are magnificent passages in this chorus, I cannot quite reconcile my ear to the rhythm; nor to some of the expressions, which are, I confess, too like prose.

[33] Ver. 181. *From Eshtaol and Zora's fruitful vale.* These were two towns of the tribe of Dan, Josh. xix. 41: the latter the birthplace of Samson, Judg. xiii. 2; and they were near one another. "And the Spirit of the Lord began to move him at times in the camp of Dan between Zorah

and Eshtaol," Judg. xiii. 25. And they were both situated in the valley, Josh. xv. 33; and therefore the poet with great exactness says "Eshtaol and Zora's fruitful vale."—NEWTON.

[34] Ver. 182. *To visit or bewail thee.* The poet dictated "to visit and bewail thee:" the purpose of their visit was to bewail him; or, if better, (that is, if they found it more proper) to advise or comfort him.—CALTON.

[35] Ver. 189. *How counterfeit a coin,* &c. The groundwork of this passage is perhaps the following in the 'Mirrour for Magistrates:'

> A golden treasure is the tried friend;
> But who may gold from counterfeits defend?

Or in Shakspeare's 'Two Gentlemen of Verona,' a. v. s. 4. "Thou counterfeit to thy true friend!"—DUNSTER.

[36] Ver. 191. *In prosperous days.* See Gray's 'Hymn to Adversity:'—

> Light they disperse, and with them go
> The summer friend, &c.

[37] Ver. 195.

Yet that which was the worst now least afflicts me.

There is no inconsistence in this with what he said before, ver. 66:—

> but chief of all,
> O loss of sight, of thee I most complain.

When he was by himself, he considered his blindness as the worst of evils; but now, upon his friends coming in and seeing him in this wretched condition, it "least afflicts me," says he; as being some cover to his shame and confusion.—NEWTON.

[38] Ver. 198.

Who, like a foolish pilot, have shipwreck'd
My vessel, &c.

Dr. Johnson observes, that "metaphors sometimes find admission where their consistency is not accurately preserved. Thus," he adds, with a reference to this passage, "Samson confounds loquacity with a shipwreck." Surely this is not criticising very accurately. The fact is, Samson ascribes his own ruin, or shipwreck, to a very natural cause, his own indiscretion. The Greek writers use "to suffer shipwreck" in a metaphorical sense. It is particularly thus used by St. Paul for shipwreck, or the most fatal ruin, when caused immediately by misconduct: "Holding faith and a good conscience; which some having put away, concerning faith have made shipwreck." In the 'Table of Cebes,' it is said of foolish and wicked men, "they suffer shipwreck in life." Compare Spenser's description of those who are wrecked on the rock of vile reproach; and who,

Having all their substance spent
In wanton ioyes and lust intemperate,
Did afterwards make shipwrack violent
Both of their life and fame, &c.—F. Q. ii. xii. 7.

It may be observed also, that St. James compares the tongue to the helm of a ship, ch. iii. 4. and that Samson suffered all he had undergone in consequence of not duly governing his tongue. The metaphor then is so far also scriptural.—Dunster.

[39] Ver. 219.

The first I saw at Timna, and she pleased
Me, not my parents, &c.

None of the critics have observed that Milton here alludes to some of the particulars of his first match. The Chorus had just before remarked,

I oft have heard men wonder
Why thou shouldst wed Philistian women rather
Than of thine own tribe fairer, or as fair.

To say nothing of the dissatisfaction Milton's first wife had conceived at her husband's unsocial and philosophical system of life, so different from the convivial cheerfulness and plenty of her father's family; it is probable that the quarrel was owing to party, which also might operate mutually: but when Cromwell's faction proved victorious, her father, who had taken a very forward part in assisting the king during the siege of Oxford, finding his affairs falling into distress, for prudential reasons strove to bring about an agreement between the separated couple: and thus the reconciliation was interested; nor was it effected but by her unsolicited and apparently humble submission, and after the most earnest entreaties, which the husband for some time resisted: on the whole, therefore, we may suppose that not much real or uninterrupted cordiality followed; and I think it clear, that Milton's own experience, in the course of this marriage, furnished the substance of the sentiments in another speech of Samson, ver. 750 to ver. 763. Phillips says that Milton was inclined to pardon his repudiated bride, "partly from his own generous nature, more inclinable to reconciliation than to perseverance in anger and revenge."—T. Warton.

[40] Ver. 226. *Divinely.* Lat. "divinitus."—Richardson.

[41] Ver. 230. *That specious monster.* In the Latin sense of specious; handsome, captivating. The whole expression seems to refer to the Echidna of Hesiod.—Dunster.

[42] Ibid. *My accomplish'd snare.* There seems to be a quibble in the use of this epithet.—Warburton.

It rather appears to be irony.—J. Warton.

[43] Ver. 241. *That fault,* &c. Milton certainly intended to reproach his countrymen indirectly, and as plainly as he dared, with the restoration of Charles II., (which he ac-

counted the restoration of slavery) and with the execution of the regicides. He pursues the same subject again, ver. 678 to ver. 700. I wonder how the licensers of those days let it pass.—JORTIN.

It is the more to be wondered at, as some passages in his 'History of England,' containing indirect remarks on his country, were struck out by the licenser, in the same year. They were afterwards printed in a quarto pamphlet, in 1681; and, in the edition of his 'Prose Works' in 1738, are admitted into their place in the third book of his History.—TODD.

[44] Ver. 247. *Used no ambition.* "Going about with studiousness and affectation to gain praise," as Mr. Richardson says; alluding to the origin of the word in Latin.—NEWTON.

[45] Ver. 253. *Safe to the rock of Etham*, &c. Judges xv. 8.—NEWTON.

[46] Ver. 268.

But what more oft, in nations grown corrupt, &c.

Here Mr. Thyer has anticipated me, by observing that Milton is very uniform, as well as just, in his notions of liberty; always attributing the loss of it to vice and corruption of morals: but in this passage he very probably intended also a secret satire upon the English nation, which, according to his republican politics, had, by restoring the king, chosen "bondage with ease" rather than "strenuous liberty." And let me add, that the sentiment is very like that of Æmilius Lepidus the consul, in his oration to the Roman people against Sulla, preserved among the fragments of Sallust:—"Annuite legibus impositis; accipite otium cum servitio;" but for myself, "potior visa est periculosa libertas quieto servitio."—NEWTON.

52797

[47] Ver. 274. *If he aught begin,*
How frequent to desert him, &c.
Is there any allusion here to the last ineffectual efforts of the republican general Lambert against Monk and the Restoration, when he was deserted by the people, and at last taken prisoner by his old partisan Ingoldsby?—DUNSTER.

[48] Ver. 278. *How Succoth and the fort of Penuel*, &c. The men of Succoth, and of the tower of Penuel, refused to give loaves of bread to Gideon and his three hundred men pursuing after Zebah and Zalmunna, kings of Midian. See Judges viii. 4—9.—NEWTON.

[49] Ver. 282. *And how ingrateful Ephraim*, &c. Jephthah subdued the children of Ammon; and he is said to have "defended Israel by argument not worse than by arms," on account of the message which he sent unto the king of the children of Ammon, Judges xi. 15—27. For his victory over the Ammonites, the Ephraimites envied and quarrelled with him; and threatened to burn his house with fire: but Jephthah and the men of Gilead smote Ephraim, and took the passages of Jordan before the Ephraimites, and there slew those of them who could not rightly pronounce the word Shibboleth; and there fell at that time two and forty thousand of them. See Judges xii. 1—6.—NEWTON.

[50] Ver. 298. *But the heart of the fool.* Alluding to Psalm xvi. 1. And the sentiment is not very unlike that of a celebrated divine:—"The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God: and who but a fool would have said so?" —NEWTON.

[51] Ver. 299. *And no man therein doctor but himself.*

There is something rather too quaint and fanciful in this conceit; and it appears the worse, as this speech of the Chorus is of so serious a nature, and filled with so many deep and solemn truths.—THYER.

[52] Ver. 303. *His glory's diminution.* This expression is strong, as anciently understood. Cic. 'de Orat.' ii. 39:—"Majestatem populi Romani minuere" is the same as "crimen læsæ majestatis." And Corn. Nepos, 'Ages.' iv. "religionem minuere" is "violare."—RICHARDSON.

[53] Ver. 319. *Vow of strictest purity.* Not a vow of celibacy, but of strictest purity from Mosaical and legal uncleanness.—WARBURTON.

[54] Ver. 324. *That moral verdict quits her of unclean.* That is, by the law of nature a Philistine woman was not unclean, yet the law of Moses held her to be so. I do not know why the poet thought fit to make his hero scepticise on a point, as irreconcilable to reason, which may be very well accounted for by the best rules of human prudence and policy. The institution of Moses was to keep the Jewish people distinct and separate from the nations: this the lawgiver effected by a vast variety of means; one of which was to hold all other nations under a legal impurity; the best means of preventing intermarriages with them.—WARBURTON.

[55] Ver. 336. *While mine cast back with age.* This is very artfully and properly introduced, to account for the Chorus coming to Samson before Manoah; for it is not to be supposed that any of his friends should be more concerned for his welfare, or more desirous to visit him, than his father.—NEWTON.

[56] Ver. 340. *O miserable change,* &c. This speech of

Manoah is, in my opinion, very beautiful in its kind. The thoughts are exactly such as one may suppose would occur to the mind of the old man, and are expressed with an earnestness and impatience very well suited to that anguish of mind he must be in, at the sight of his son under such miserable, afflicting circumstances. It is not at all unbecoming the pious, grave character of Manoah, to represent him, as Milton does, even complaining and murmuring at this "disposition" of Heaven, in the first bitterness of his soul. Such sudden starts of infirmity are ascribed to some of the greatest personages in Scripture; and it is agreeable to that well-known maxim, that religion may regulate, but can never eradicate natural passions and affections.—THYER.

[57] Ver. 359.

Then, given with solemn hand
As graces, draw a scorpion's tail behind?

He has raised this beautiful imagery on the following text, Luke xi. 12:—"If a son shall ask of his father an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?" He was not always so happy.—WARBURTON.

He has been peculiarly happy in the use of this imagery. Thus again:—"A most deadly and scorpion-like gift," 'Prose Works,' vol. i. p. 304. ed. 1698. Again, in his 'Tetrachordon:'—"It is man's perverse cooking, who hath turned this bounty of God into a scorpion." Ibid. p. 335. —TODD.

[58] Ver. 362. *As of a plant.* This is a frequent scriptural metaphor. See Isaiah v. 7. liii. 2. Homer describes Thetis thus speaking of her son Achilles, 'Il.' xviii. 57. Theocritus also speaks in similar language of Hercules, 'Idyll.' xxiv. 101.—DUNSTER.

[59] Ver. 365. *Ensnared, assaulted, overcome, led bound.*

The succession of participles renders the description more pathetic, as in ver. 563 :—

Now blind, dishearten'd, shamed, dishonour'd, quell'd.

An example of similar effect occurs in the poet's description of the fallen angels, after their defeat, 'Paradise Lost,' b. vi. 851 :—

Of their wonted vigour drain'd,
Exhausted, spiritless, afflicted, fallen. TODD.

[60] Ver. 373. *Appoint.* That is, arraign, summon to answer.—WARBURTON.

Perhaps limit, or direct; or rather, according to an old acceptation of the word, blame, lay the fault upon. See Barret's 'Alvearie,' 1580. "Appoynt," col. 2. No. 497. —TODD.

[61] Ver. 391. *Treason against me.* By our laws called petty treason.—RICHARDSON.

[62] Ver. 394. *My capital secret.* I am afraid this is an intended pun; if so, it is a most indefensible expression; and yet resembling what is said, 'Paradise Lost,' b. xii. 383 :—

Needs must the serpent now his capital bruise
Expect with pain;

where the reference certainly is to the seed of the woman bruising the head of the serpent.—DUNSTER.

[63] Ver. 404. *Tongue-batteries,* &c. The phrase was probably suggested by Shakspeare, 'King Henry VI.' p. i. a. iii. s. 3 :—

I am vanquish'd; these haughty words of hers
Have batter'd me like roaring cannon-shot, &c.

That this passage was in the poet's mind, may be farther proved, I think, from ver. 235 :—

> Who, vanquish'd with a peal of words,
> Gave up my fort.

Compare also the following passage in an old drama, entitled 'The History of the Tryall of Cheualry,' &c. 4to. 1605 :—

> Eares—
> Pearst with the volley of thy battring words.

The scriptural account is this :—"And it came to pass, when she pressed him daily with her words, and urged him so that his soul was vexed unto death, that he told her all his heart," Judges xvi. 16, 17.—Todd.

[64] Ver. 411. *O indignity, O blot*, &c. Nothing could give the reader a better idea of a great and heroic spirit in the circumstances of Samson, than this sudden gust of indignation and passionate self-reproach upon the mentioning of his weakness. Besides, there is something vastly grand and noble in his reflection upon his present condition on this occasion :—

> These rags, this grinding is not yet so base, &c.
> Thyer.

[65] Ver. 434. *This day the Philistines a popular feast*, &c. Judges xvi. 23 :—"Then the lords of the Philistines gathered them together, for to offer a great sacrifice unto Dagon their god, and to rejoice; for they said, Our god hath delivered Samson our enemy into our hand," &c. This incident the poet has finely improved, and with great judgment he has put this reproach of Samson into the mouth of his father, rather than any other of the dramatis personæ.—Newton.

[66] Ver. 471. *Blank his worshippers.* That is, confound. So, in 'Hamlet,' a. iii. s. 2.

Each opposite that blanks the face of joy.

Milton often uses the adjective "blank" also in the sense of confounded.—TODD.

[67] Ver. 472. *And these words*
I as a prophecy receive.

This method of one person's taking an omen from the words of another, was frequently practised among the ancients; and in these words the downfall of Dagon's worshippers is artfully presignified, as the death of Samson is in other places; but Manoah, as it was natural, accepts the good omen, without thinking of the evil that is to follow.—NEWTON.

[68] Ver. 500. *That Gentiles in their parables condemn,* &c. Alluding to the story of Tantalus, who for revealing the secrets of the gods was condemned to pains in hell. Cicero, 'Tusc. Disp.' iv. 16. "Poetæ impendere apud inferos saxum Tantalo faciunt ob scelera, animique impotentiam, et superbiloquentiam." Euripides assigns the same punishment, and for the same reason, 'Orestes,' v. 8.

Mr. Warburton's remark is that "the ancient mystagogues taught, that the gods punished both the revealers and the violators of their mysteries. Milton had here in his eye that fine passage of Virgil, 'Æn.' vi. 617.

Sedet, æternumque sedebit,
Infelix Theseus, Phlegyasque miserrimus omnes
Admonet, &c. NEWTON.

The passage, cited by Dr. Newton from the 'Tusculan Questions,' does not explain the story of Tantalus as here referred to: neither does the passage from Euripides without its gloss from the scholiast; where indeed it is said that Tantalus was punished for revealing the mysteries of the

gods. But the classical authority in Milton's mind I suppose to have been that of Ovid, who expressly ascribes the punishment of Tantalus to his shameful garrulity, which is said to be a grievous crime, 'De Art. Amandi,' ii. 601, &c. —DUNSTER.

[69] Ver. 516. *Reject not then what offer'd means.* That is, those means, which who knows but God hath set before us: "what" for "those which." The expression is a little hard, but to this effect: "Reject not these means of ransom, which, for any thing one can tell, God may have set before us, or suggested to us, in order to return thee," &c.—HURD.

[70] Ver. 532.

Into the snare I fell
Of fair fallacious looks, venereal trains.

See Fairfax's translation of Tasso, b. iv. 26. where Hedroart, sending Armida to seduce the christian host, and, if possible, its leader, bids her

Frame snares of looks, trains of alluring speech.
DUNSTER.

[71] Ver. 535. *At length to lay my head*, &c. Compare Spenser's 'Faerie Queene,' ii. vi. 14.

Thus when shee had his eyes and sences fed
With false delights, and fill'd with pleasures vayn,
Into a shady vale she soft him led,
And layd him downe upon a grassy playn:
She sett beside, laying his head disarm'd
In her loose lap. TODD.

[72] Ver. 543. *The dancing ruby*, &c. Dr. Newton and Mr. Thyer remark, that the poet probably alludes to Prov. xxiii. 31. "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth its colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright." Milton has also "rubied nectar," Par. Lost, b. v. 633.

And dancing he has transferred hither from his 'Comus,' v. 673.

> And first behold this cordial julep here,
> That flames and dances in his crystal bounds. TODD.

[72] Ver. 545. *Or taste that cheers the heart of gods and men.* Judges ix. 13. "Wine which cheereth God and man." Milton says "gods," which is a just paraphrase, meaning the hero-gods of the heathen. Jotham is here speaking to an idolatrous city, that "ran a whoring after Baalim, and made Baal-berith their god;" a god sprung from among men, as may be partly collected from his name, as well as from divers other circumstances of the story. Hesiod, in a similar expression, says that "the vengeance of the Fates pursued the crimes of gods and men," Theog. v. 220. —WARBURTON.

[74] Ver. 546. *Cool crystalline stream.* Borrowed by Mason, in his additions to Gray's fragment of an 'Ode to Vicissitude.'

[75] Ver. 547.

> *Wherever fountain or fresh current flow'd*
> *Against the eastern ray,* &c.

This circumstance was very probably suggested to our author by Tasso's poem 'Del Mondo creato,' giorna iii. st. 8.—THYER.

Mr. Geddes, in his learned and entertaining 'Essay on the Composition, &c. of Plato,' considers these lines of Milton as possessing much of the same spirit, though applied to another thing, with a passage in the philosopher's 'Io,' p. 533, 534, tom. i. edit. Serran. where, speaking of the poets, he says, "As soon as they enter the winding mazes of harmony, they become lymphatic, and rove like the furious Bacchanals, who in their frenzy draw honey and milk out of the rivers. The poets tell us the same thing of themselves," &c. Essay, 1748, p. 184.—TODD.

[76] Ver. 549. *With touch ethereal of Heaven's fiery rod.* This description of the first ray of light at the moment of sunrise, is eminently bold and beautiful. We might trace it to Euripides, 'Suppl.' 652. to which Dr. Hurd refers Milton's "long-level'd rule of streaming light," Comus, v. 340.—DUNSTER.

[77] Ver. 557. *Whose drink,* &c. Samson was a Nazarite, Judges xiii. 7; therefore to drink no wine, nor shave his head. See Numb. vi. Amos ii. 12.—RICHARDSON.

[78] Ver. 566. *But to sit idle on the household hearth,* &c. It is supposed, with probability enough, that Milton chose Samson for his subject, because he was a fellow-sufferer with him in the loss of his eyes: however, one may venture to say, that the similitude of their circumstances has enriched the poem with several very pathetic descriptions of the misery of blindness.—THYER.

[79] Ver. 571. *Craze my limbs.* He uses the word "craze" much in the same manner as in the 'Par. Lost,' b. xii. 210. —NEWTON.

[80] Ver. 574. *Draff.* The refuse. See 'Par. Lost,' b. x. 630. Thus Chaucer, 'Prol. to the Parsones Tale:'—

> Why should I sowen draf out of my fist,
> When I may sowen whete if that me liste?

And Shakspeare, 'Hen. IV.' part 1. a. iv. s. 2. "You would think I had a hundred and fifty tattered prodigals, lately come from swine-keeping, from eating draff and husks."—DUNSTER.

[81] Ver. 581.

> *But God, who caused a fountain at thy prayer*
> *From the dry ground to spring,* &c.

See Judges xv. 18, 19. But Milton differs from our translation of the Bible. The translation says, that "God

clave a hollow place that was in the jaw:" Milton says, that "God caused a fountain from the dry ground to spring;" and herein he follows the Chaldee paraphrast and the best commentators, who understand it that God made a cleft in some part of the ground or rock, in the place called Lehi; Lehi signifying both a jaw, and a place so called.—NEWTON.

[82] Ver. 588. *His might continues*, &c. A fine preparative, which raises our expectation of some great event to be produced by his strength.—WARBURTON.

[83] Ver. 594. *So much I feel my genial spirits droop*, &c. Here Milton, in the person of Samson, describes exactly his own case, what he felt, and what he thought, in some of his melancholy hours: he could not have written so well but from his own feeling and experience; and the very flow of the verses is melancholy, and excellently adapted to the subject. As Mr. Thyer expresses it, there is a remarkable solemnity and air of melancholy, in the very sound of these verses; and the reader will find it very difficult to pronounce them without that grave and serious tone of voice which is proper for the occasion.—NEWTON.

Every reader of taste must subscribe with heartiness to this testimony of Thyer and Newton. The passage is truly pathetic and melodious.

[84] Ver. 600. *And humours black,*
That mingle with thy fancy.

This very just notion of the mind or fancy's being affected, and as it were tainted with the vitiated humours of the body, Milton had before adopted in his 'Paradise Lost,' where he introduces Satan in the shape of a toad at the ear of Eve, b. iv. 804.

Or if, inspiring venom, he might taint
The animal spirits, &c.

So again in 'Comus,' v. 809.

'Tis but the lees
And settlings of a melancholy blood. THYER.

[85] Ver. 601. *I however*
Must not omit, &c.

Such is also the language of Oceanus to his nephew Prometheus, Æsch. 'Prom. Vinct.'—DUNSTER.

[86] Ver. 606. *O, that torment should not be confined*, &c. Milton, no doubt, was apprehensive that this long description of Samson's grief and misery might grow tedious to the reader, and therefore here with great judgment varies both his manner of expressing it, and the versification. These sudden starts of impatience are very natural, to persons in such circumstances, and this rough and unequal measure of the verse is very well suited to it.—THYER.

[87] Ver. 623.
Thoughts, my tormentors, arm'd with deadly stings,
Mangle, &c.

This descriptive imagery is fine and well pursued. The idea is taken from the effects of poisonous salts in the stomach and bowels, which stimulate, tear, inflame, and exulcerate the tender fibres, and end in a mortification, which he calls "death's benumming opium," as in that stage the pain is over.—WARBURTON.

[88] Ver. 627. *Or med'cinal liquor.* Here "medicinal" is pronounced with the accent upon the last syllable but one, as in Latin; which is more musical than as we commonly pronounce it, "medicinal," with the accent upon the last syllable but two, or "med'cinal" as Milton has used it in 'Comus.' The same pronunciation occurs in Shakspeare, 'Othello,' a. v. s. 2:—

Drop tears as fast as the Arabian trees
Their medicinal gum. NEWTON.

"Medicinal" is not the reading of Milton's own edition: in that it is "medcinal." The supposed emendation of "medicinal" is made in the folio of 1688, and it has been since invariably followed.—TODD.

[89] Ver. 628. *Nor breath of vernal air.* So, in that most delightful passage in 'Paradise Lost,' b. iv. 264:—

airs, vernal airs,
Breathing the smell of field and grove. TODD.

[90] Ibid. *From snowy Alp.* He uses "Alp" for mountain in general, as in 'Paradise Lost,' b. ii. 620. "Alp," in the strict etymology of the word, signifies a mountain white with snow. We have indeed appropriated the name to the high mountains which separate Italy from France and Germany; but any high mountain may be so called, and so Sidonius Apollinaris calls Mount Athos, speaking of Xerxes cutting through it, 'Carm.' ii. 510.—NEWTON.

Milton took this use of the word from the Italian poets, amongst whom it was very common.—HURD.

[91] Ver. 633. *I was his nursling once,* &c. This part of Samson's speech is little more than a repetition of what he had said before, v. 23:—

O, wherefore was my birth from Heaven foretold
Twice by an angel, &c.

But yet it cannot justly be imputed as a fault to our author. Grief, though eloquent, is not tied to forms; and is besides apt in its own nature frequently to recur to, and repeat, its source and subject.—THYER.

[92] Ver. 658. *And much persuasion sought.* I suppose an error of the press for *fraught.*—WARBURTON.

But "sought" may mean, collected studiously or with pains; or, it may be used in the sense of *recherché* in French; curious, refined, far-fetched.—DUNSTER.

[93] Ver. 659. *Lenient of grief.* Expressed from what we quoted before from Horace, ' Ep.' 1. i. 34 :—

Sunt verba et voces, quibus hunc lenire dolorem
Possis. NEWTON.

[94] Ver. 661. *Or rather seems a tune*
Harsh, and of dissonant mood, &c.

Alluding to Ecclus. xxii. 6 :—" A tale out of season is as music in mourning."—THYER.

[95] Ver. 667. *God of our fathers, what is man!* &c. This, and the following paragraph, to ver. 705. seem to be an imitation of the Chorus in Seneca's ' Hippolytus,' where the immature and undeserved fate of that young hero is lamented, a. iv. 971 :—

sed cur idem,
Qui tanta regis, sub quo vasti
Pondera mundi librata suos
Ducunt orbes, hominum nimium
Securus ades; non sollicitus
Prodesse bonis, nocuisse malis? THYER.

This apostrophe opens with a sublime pathos.

[96] Ver. 669. *Contrarious.* This seems to me a harsh word, though Todd shows that it is used by Chaucer.

[97] Ver. 677. *Heads without name,* &c. So Dryden :—

A tribe without a name.

Milton here probably had in view the Greek term for this lower class of mortals. They style them " men not numbered," or " not worth the numbering."—THYER.

[98] Ver. 683. *Amidst their highth of noon.* This forcible expression is applied in the same manner by Sandys, in his ' Paraphrase upon Job,' ed. 1648, p. 34 :—

When men are from their noon of glory thrown.

Again, in his 'Paraphrase upon the Psalms,' ed. supr. p. 127:—

> Thou hast on slippery heights their greatness placed;
> Down headlong from their noon of glory cast. TODD.

[99] Ver. 693. *Their carcasses*
To dogs and fowls a prey.
Plainly alluding to Homer, 'Il.' i. 4.—NEWTON.

[100] Ver. 695.
Or to the unjust tribunals, under change of times, &c.
Here, no doubt, Milton reflected upon the trials and sufferings of his party after the Restoration; and probably he might have in mind particularly the case of Sir Harry Vane, whom he has so highly celebrated in one of his sonnets. "If these they 'scape, perhaps in poverty," &c.: this was his own case; he escaped with life, but lived in poverty; and though he was always very sober and temperate, yet he was much afflicted with the gout and other "painful diseases in crude old age," *cruda senectus*, when he was not yet a very old man:—

> Though not disordinate, yet causeless suffering
> The punishment of dissolute days.

Some time after I had written this, I had the pleasure to find that I had fallen into the same vein of thinking with Mr. Warburton: but he has opened and pursued it much farther, with a penetration and liveliness of fancy peculiar to himself. "God of our fathers," to ver. 704, is a bold expostulation with Providence for the ill success of the good old cause:—

> But such as thou hast solemnly elected,
> With gifts and graces eminently adorn'd
> To some great work thy glory.

In these three lines are described the characters of the heads of the independent enthusiasts: "which in part they

effect;" that is, by the overthrow of the monarchy, without being able to raise their projected republic:—

> Yet toward these thus dignified, thou oft,
> Amidst their highth of noon,
> Changest thy countenance.

After Richard had laid down, all power came into the hands of the enthusiastic independent republicans; when a sudden revolution, by the return of Charles II., broke all their measures:—

> With no regard
> Of highest favours past
> From thee on them, or them to thee of service;

that is, without any regard of those favours shown by thee to them in their wonderful successes against tyranny and superstition, [church and state] or of those services they paid to thee in declaring for religion and liberty, [independency and a republic.]

> Nor only dost degrade, &c.
> Too grievous for the trespass or omission.

By the trespass of these precious saints, Milton means the quarrels among themselves; and by the omission, the not making a clear stage in the constitution, and new-modelling the law, as well as national religion, as Ludlow advised. "Captived:" several were condemned to perpetual imprisonment, as Lambert and Martin. "Or to the unjust tribunals," &c. The trials and condemnation of Vane and the regicides. The concluding verses describe his own case:—

> If these they 'scape, perhaps in poverty—
> Painful diseases and deform'd—
> Though not disordinate, yet causeless suffering
> The punishment of dissolute days:

his losses in the excise, and his gout not caused by intemperance. But Milton was the most heated enthusiast of

his time: speaking of Charles I.'s murder in his 'Defence of the People of England,' he says:—"Quanquam ego hæc divino potius instinctu gesta esse crediderim, quoties memoria repeto," &c.—NEWTON.

[101] Ver. 700. *In crude old age.* "Crude old age" in Virgil, and in other writers, is strong and robust,—"cruda Deo viridisque senectus:" but Milton uses here "crude" for premature, and coming before its time; as "cruda funera" in Statius: old age brought on by poverty and by sickness.—JORTIN.

[102] Ver. 704. *For oft alike both come to evil end.* This may seem a strange sentiment to come from the Chorus; but was proper to console Samson, who suffered chiefly from those "thoughts his tormentors," which represented his calamity as a decisive mark of his superior guilt, and of Heaven's resentment. Hence those "swoonings of despair, and sense of Heaven's desertion," for which there was no cause, if the just might sometimes thus suffer. This condescension is of the character of the Chorus:—"Ille bonis faveat et consilietur amice!" We are not to consider the sentiment simply in itself, but as adapted to present circumstances. The purpose of the Chorus was not to calumniate Providence, but to soothe the unhappy sufferer. Besides, the general moral of the piece, enforced by the Chorus itself at the end;—"All is best, though we oft doubt," &c. rectifies all, and counteracts any ill impression from this carnal sentiment.—HURD.

[103] Ver. 708.

Behold him in this state calamitous, and turn
His labours, for thou canst, to peaceful end.

The concluding verses of this beautiful chorus appear to me particularly affecting, from the persuasion that Milton, in composing them, addressed the last two immediately to

Heaven, as a prayer for himself. If the conjecture of this application be just, we may add, that never was the prevalence of a righteous prayer more happily conspicuous; and let me here remark, that however various the opinions of men may be concerning the merits or demerits of Milton's political character, the integrity of his heart appears to have secured to him the favour of Providence; since it pleased the Giver of all good not only to turn his labours to a peaceful end, but to irradiate his declining life with the most abundant portion of those pure and sublime mental powers, for which he had constantly and fervently prayed, as the choicest bounty of Heaven.—HAYLEY.

[104] Ver. 714. *Like a stately ship*, &c. The thought of comparing a woman to a ship is not entirely new. Plautus has it in his 'Pœnulus, I. ii. 1:—

> Negotii sibi qui volet vim parare,
> Navem et mulierem, hæc duo comparato, &c.

Mr. Warburton, in a note on the 'Merry Wives of Windsor,' a. iii. s. 8, speaking of the ship-tire, says, "it was an open head-dress, with a kind of scarf depending from behind." Its name of ship-tire was, I presume, from its giving the wearer some resemblance of a ship, as Shakspeare says, "in all her trim;" with all her pennants out, and flags and streamers flying. Thus Milton paints Dalila. This was an image familiar with the poets of that time. Thus, in Beaumont and Fletcher's 'Wit without Money:'—"She spreads sattens as the king's ships do canvas."—NEWTON.

[105] Ver. 715. *Of Tarsus.* There is frequent mention in Scripture of the ships of Tarshish, which Milton, as well as some commentators, might conceive to be the same as Tarsus, in Cilicia:—"bound for the isles of Javan," that is, Greece; for Javan or Ion, the fourth son of Japhet, is

said to have peopled Greece and Ionia, or Gadire, Gades, Cadiz.—NEWTON.

[106] Ver. 717.

With all her bravery on, and tackle trim,
Sails fill'd, &c.

Gray has also drawn a beautiful comparison of a ship in gallant trim, in his 'Bard,' v. 71, &c. I beg leave to introduce to the reader's notice a similar description, of remarkable elegance, in Giles Fletcher's 'Christ's Victorie,' b. ii. st. 35 :—

Like as a ship, in which no ballance lies,
Without a pilot, on the sleeping waves,
Fairly along with winde and water flies,
And painted masts with silken sails embraves,
That Neptune's self the bragging vessel saves,
To laugh awhile at her so proud array:
Her waving streamers loosely she lets play,
And flagging colours shine as bright as smiling day.

Where "embraves" is decorates; as "bravery" in the text is finery or ornament; in which sense the word is commonly used by our old poets.—TODD.

[107] Ver. 718. *Streamers waving,*
Courted by all the winds.

This is a beautiful image, exquisitely expressed. The whole of this chorus is among the finest passages in this grand poem.

[108] Ver. 726. *Yet on she moves,* &c. Like Ismene in the 'Antigone' of Sophocles, v. 532.

Mr. Jortin and Mr. Thyer both concurred in the same observation, and therefore it is more likely to be true.—NEWTON.

[109] Ver. 727. *But now, with head declined,*
Like a fair flower, &c.

Probably from Homer, 'Il.' viii. 306.

Dryden, in his 'Aurengzebe,' has almost literally copied Milton:—

> Your head declined, as hiding grief from view,
> Droops, like a rose surcharged with morning dew.

Phineas Fletcher is fond of this classical allusion. See his 'Purple Island,' c. xi. st. 30. and particularly st. 38:—

> So have I often seen a purple flower,
> Fainting through heat, hang down her drooping head, &c.

Carew has also a similar comparison:—

> As lilies, overcharged with rain, they bend
> Their beauteous heads, &c. TODD.

[110] Ver. 732. *With doubtful feet*, &c. The scene between Samson and Dalila is drawn up with great judgment and particular beauty. One cannot conceive a more artful, soft, and persuasive eloquence than that which is put into the mouth of Dalila; nor is the part of Samson less to be admired for that stern and resolute firmness which runs through it. What also gives both parts a great additional beauty, is their forming so fine a contrast to each other.—THYER.

[111] Ver. 748. *Out, out, hyæna.* The hyæna is a creature somewhat like a wolf, and is said to imitate a human voice so artfully as to draw people to it, and then devour them. So Solinus, the transcriber of Pliny, cap. 27:—"Multa de ea mira: primum, quod sequitur stabula pastorum, et auditu assiduo addiscit vocamen, quod exprimere possit imitatione vocis humanæ, ut in hominem astu accitum nocte sæviat." A celebrated tragic writer makes use of the same comparison, 'Orphan,' a. iii.:—

> 'Tis thus the false hyæna makes her moan,
> To draw the pitying traveller to her den:
> Your sex are so, such false dissemblers all, &c.

Milton applies it to a woman, but Otway to the men;

which with the greater justice, let the critics and the ladies determine.—NEWTON.

[112] Ver. 759.

That wisest and best men, full oft beguiled,
With goodness, &c.

Milton had reason to lament that excess of indulgence, with which he forgave and received again his disobedient and long-alienated wife; since their reunion not only disquieted his days, but gave birth to daughters, who seem to have inherited the perversity of their mother. These pathetic lines strike me as a forcible allusion to his own connubial infelicity.—HAYLEY.

[113] Ver. 762. *Are drawn to wear out miserable days.* He makes the same reflection, in his 'Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce,' on two persons ill embarkt in wedlock. "What folly is it to stand combating and battering against invincible causes and effects, with evil upon evil, till either the best of our days be lingered out, or ended with some speeding sorrow!" b. i. 10.—TODD.

This passage from the above tract about invincible causes and effects confirms the observation with regard to the ill-assortment of Milton's first marriage.

[114] Ver. 808. *Mine and love's prisoner.* These few words express the substance of Juliet's beautiful speech to Romeo:—

'Tis almost morning; I would have thee gone;
And yet no farther than a wanton's bird;
Who lets it hop a little from her hand,
Like a poor prisoner in his twisted gyves;
And with a silk thread plucks it back again,
So loving-jealous of his liberty. TODD.

[115] Ver. 825.

Such pardon therefore as I give my folly,
Take to thy wicked deed, &c.

These sentiments of self-condemnation are expressed with wonderful dignity: they reflect all the noble and resolute virtue of the poet's own highly-principled mind.—DUNSTER.

[116] Ver. 840. *Knowing, as needs I must, by thee betray'd?* The same manner of speaking, as in 'Paradise Lost,' b. ix. 792:—

And knew not eating death. NEWTON.

[117] Ver. 850. *Thou know'st, the magistrates*, &c. Judges xvi. 5:—"And the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and said," &c. So exact is Milton in all the particulars of the story, and improves every incident.—NEWTON.

Compare the account, related by Sallust, of Cicero, who secured the harlot Fulvia to his interest; and through her means gained, by the force of promises, his intelligence of Catiline's machinations from Q. Curius, who was engaged in the conspiracy, and with whom Fulvia was criminally connected: "A principio consulatus sui, multa per Fulviam pollicendo, effecerat, ut Q. Curius (cui cum Fulvia stupri vetus consuetudo) consilia Catilinæ sibi proderet."—TODD.

[118] Ver. 857. *And the priest*
Was not behind, &c.

The character of the priest, which makes a conspicuous figure here, is the poet's own addition to the scriptural account. It is obviously a satire on the ministers of the church.—DUNSTER.

[119] Ver. 878. *Loved thee, as too well thou knew'st.* There is an inconsistency here with what Samson had said before: here he professes a violent affection for Dalila, as the sole motive of his marrying her; whereas he had before asserted that he was in a certain degree determined to it by hopes of finding occasion thereby to oppress the Philistines, ver. 234.

Manoah likewise says, that Samson pleaded "divine impulsion" for both his marriages, ver. 422. But Milton may be understood to have imagined Samson, in his marriage with Dalila, acting merely from inclination, and (as people, who do so, are apt to reason falsely in their own vindication) falsely attributing and ascribing it to divine impulse. This is consistent with what is said, ver. 532, where Samson describes himself "swollen with pride," that is, at his superior strength; and on that account, as it seems, deserted by God, and falling into the "snare of fair fallacious looks," &c. So that what he here says to Dalila is true; and the real motives of his marrying her were, that he "loved her," as he himself says, "too well."—Dunster.

[120] Ver. 885. *Being once a wife.* Here seems again an allusion to the poet's own case, with reference to the cause of the parliamentarians against that of the king, to which his wife was attached.

[121] Ver. 901. *And varnish'd colours failing.* See his 'Prose Works,' vol. i. p. 161, ed. 1698. "Painting his lewd and deceitful principles with a smooth and glossy varnish in a doctrinall way, to bring about his wickedest purposes." I apprehend that Milton might employ the expression, in allusion to St. James's description of the tongue, which is called "the varnish of iniquity," as it should be rendered. See Wetstein in Jac. iii. 6.—Todd.

[122] Ver. 914. *Though sight be lost,* &c. We have a similar sentiment in Cicero, 'Tusc. Quæst.' "Animo autem multis modis variisque delectari licet, etiam si non adhibeatur aspectus," l. v. c. 38.—Dunster.

[123] Ver. 934. *Thy fair enchanted cup, and warbling charms.* Alluding, no doubt, to the story of Circe and the sirens:

but did not our author's fondness for Greek learning make him here forget that it is a little out of character to represent Samson acquainted with the mythology of that country? It seems the more odd, as the allusion to the adder, immediately following, is taken from Scripture.—THYER.

He might as well be supposed to know the story of Circe and the sirens, as of Tantalus, &c. before, v. 500; and there is no more impropriety in the one than in the other.—NEWTON.

Mr. Thyer's observation is, however, just; and Dr. Johnson has not forgotten to notice the impropriety of all these allusions. Mr. Glasse, in his translation, and Mr. Penn, in his alteration, of this tragedy, have omitted these objectionable passages.—TODD.

[124] Ver. 936. *So much of adder's wisdom I have learn'd.* The allusion is to Psalm lviii. 4, 5:—"They are like the deaf adder, that stoppeth her ear; which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely."—NEWTON.

[125] Ver. 953. *To tear thee joint by joint.* Milton perhaps recollected blind Polymestor's desire of revenge upon Hecuba, in the play of that name by Euripides, v. 1125. ed. Barnes.—TODD.

[126] Ver. 958. *Cherish thy hasten'd widowhood.* This sarcastical irony is very fine.

[127] Ver. 973. *On both his wings, one black, the other white.* Milton, in his poem 'In Quint. Nov.' speaking of Fame, says,

Induit et variis exilia corpora plumis.

I do not recollect any instance of Fame having two wings of different colours assigned by any of the Roman poets.

Milton seems to have equipped his deity very characteristically, by borrowing one wing from Infamy, and another from Victory or Glory, as they are both described by Silius Italicus; where Virtue contrasts herself with Pleasure or Dissipation, l. xv. 95:—

atris
Circa te semper volitans Infamia pennis;
Mecum Honor, et Laudes, et læto Gloria vultu,
Et Decus, et niveis Victoria concolor alis.

Ben Jonson, in one of his Masks, introduces Fama Bona attired in white, with white wings; and she terms herself "the white-wing'd maid."—DUNSTER.

[128] Ver. 974. *Bears greatest names in his wild aery flight.* I think Fame has passed for a goddess ever since Hesiod deified her. Milton makes her a god, I know not why, unless secundum eos, qui dicunt utriusque sexus participationem habere numina. So, in his 'Lycidas,' he says, unless it be a false print,

So may some gentle Muse
With lucky words favour my destined urn,
And as he passes turn;

where Muse in the masculine for poet is very bold.

Perhaps it should here also be,

Bears greatest names in his wide aery flight.

What Milton says of Fame's bearing great names on his wings, seems to be partly from Horace, 'Od.' II. ii. 7:—

Illum aget penna metuente solvi
Fama superstes. JORTIN.

I apprehend that "wild" is full as applicable as "wide" to the character and office of Fame: and thus Shakspeare, 'Othello,' a. ii. s. 1:—

That paragons description and wild fame. TODD.

[129] Ver. 982. *I shall be named*, &c. See the 'Heraclidæ' of Euripides, v. 598.—DUNSTER.

[130] Ver. 986. *My tomb*
With odours visited and annual flowers.

What is said in Scripture of the daughter of Jephthah, "that the daughters of Israel went yearly to lament her," seems to imply that this solemn and periodical visitation of the tombs of eminent persons was an eastern custom.—THYER.

This affectionate custom of decorating the tombs of departed friends has descended to later times. See the 'Iphigenia in Tauris' of Euripides, v. 632, ed. Barnes. It still exists in some parts of this island. Shakspeare alludes to it in 'Cymbeline,' a. iv. s. 5:—

> with fairest flowers,
> Whilst summer lasts, and I live here, Fidele,
> I 'll sweeten thy sad grave.

Whence Collins, with remarkable taste and pathos;—

> To fair Fidele's grassy tomb,
> Soft maids and village hinds shall bring
> Each opening sweet of earliest bloom,
> And rifle all the blooming spring.

I take this opportunity of observing, that Collins may probably have been indebted to a fine passage in Beaumont and Fletcher, 'The Lover's Progress,' a. iv. s. 1:—

> I will kneel by him,
> And on his hallow'd earth do my last duties:
> I 'll gather all the pride of spring to deck him:
> Woodbines shall grow upon his honour'd grave;
> And, as they prosper, clasp, to show our friendship;
> And, when they wither, I 'll die too. TODD.

[131] Ver. 988.
Not less renown'd than in Mount Ephraim, ...
Jael.

Jael is celebrated in the noble song of Deborah and Barak, Judg. v. "And Deborah dwelt between Ramah and Bethel in Mount Ephraim," Judg. iv. 5.—NEWTON.

[132] Ver. 995. *At this whoever envies or repines,*
I leave him to his lot, and like my own.
See Teucer to the Chorus in Sophocles, 'Ajax,' v. 1060. —Calton.

[133] Ver. 997. *A manifest serpent by her sting.* The son of Sirach makes a similar observation on "an evil wife," Ecclus. xxvi. 7:—"He that hath hold of her is as though he held a scorpion."—Todd.

[134] Ver. 1003.
Yet beauty, though injurious, hath strange power.
This truth Milton has finely exemplified in Adam forgiving Eve; and he had full experience of it in his own case. See 'Paradise Lost,' b. x. 940.—Newton.

[135] Ver. 1008. *Love-quarrels oft in pleasing concord end.* Terence, 'Andria,' III. iii. 23:—
Amantium iræ amoris integratio est. Newton.

[136] Ver. 1010. *It is not virtue,* &c. However just the observation may be, that Milton, in his 'Paradise Lost,' seems to court the favour of the female sex, it is very certain that he did not carry the same complaisance into this performance. What the Chorus here says, outgoes the very bitterest satire of Euripides, who was called the "woman-hater." It may be said, indeed, in excuse, that the occasion was very provoking; and that these reproaches are rather to be looked upon as a sudden start of resentment, than cool and sober reasoning.—Thyer.

These reflections are the more severe, as they are not spoken by Samson, who might be supposed to utter them out of pique and resentment, but are delivered by the Chorus as serious and important truths. But, by all accounts, Milton himself had suffered some uneasiness through the temper and behaviour of two of his wives; and no won-

der therefore, that, upon so tempting an occasion as this, he indulges his spleen a little, depreciates the qualifications of the women, and asserts the superiority of the men; and, to give these sentiments the greater weight, puts them into the mouth of the Chorus.—Newton.

[137] Ver. 1020. *Thy paranymph.* Bride-man. "But Samson's wife was given to his companion, whom he had used as his friend," Judg. xiv. 20.—Richardson.

[138] Ver. 1034. *To wisest men and best.* Read "to the wisest man." See the following expressions: "in his way;" "draws him awry."—Meadowcourt.

We have such a change of the number in the 'Paradise Lost,' b. ix. 1183.—Newton.

I see no cause for this alteration.

[139] Ver. 1035. *Under virgin veil.* Perhaps Milton here alludes to the Jewish virgins, who, being kept secluded from the sight of men, were called hidden or concealed; and, when they were first presented to their husbands, covered their heads with a veil. But see his 'Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce,' b. i. chap. 3; where he is speaking of the disappointments which may happen, in choosing a wife, to "the sober man, honouring the appearance of modesty, and hoping well of every social virtue under the veil."—Todd.

[140] Ver. 1039. *A cleaving mischief.* These words allude to the poisoned shirt sent to Hercules by his wife Dejanira. —Meadowcourt.

[141] Ver. 1046. *Favour'd of Heaven, who finds,* &c. If Milton, like Solomon and the son of Sirach, satirises the women in general, like them too he commends the virtuous and good; and esteems a good wife a blessing from the

Lord. See Prov. xviii. 22. xix. 14. and Ecclus. xxvi. 1, 2. —Newton.

[142] Ver. 1079. *Men call me Harapha*, &c. This character is fictitious, but is properly introduced by the poet, and not without some foundation in Scripture. Arapha, or rather Rapha, (says Calmet) was father of the giants of Rephaim. The word Rapha may likewise signify simply a giant. "Of stock renown'd as Og;" see Deut. iii. 11. "Or Anak, and the Emims old;" see Deut. ii. 10, 11. "That Kiriathaim held;" see Gen. xiv. 5.—Newton.

[143] Ver. 1081. *Thou know'st me now,*
If thou at all art known.

He is made to speak in the spirit, and almost in the language of Satan, 'Paradise Lost,' b. iv. 830:—

Not to know me argues yourselves unknown.

Newton.

[144] Ver. 1093. *Gyves.* Chains. So, in 'Cymbeline,' a. v. s. 3:—

Must I repent?
I cannot do it better than in gyves.

And in Fairfax's 'Tasso,' b. v. st. 42:—

These hands were made to shake sharp spears and swords,
Not to be tied in gyves, &c.

Newton.

[145] Ver. 1117. *Sight may give thee,*
Or rather flight.

This play on words is beneath Milton.

[146] Ver. 1120. *And brigandine of brass*, &c. "Brigandine," a coat of mail. Jer. xlvi. 4:—"Furbish the spears, and put on the brigandines." See also li. 3. "Ha-

bergeon," a coat of mail for the neck and shoulders. 'Faer. Qu.' ii. vi. 29:—

> Their mighty strokes their habergeons dismail'd,
> And naked made each others manly spalles:

"Spalles," that is, shoulders. And see Fairfax, b. i. st. 72. "Vant-brace," avant-bras, armour for the arms. So, in 'Troil. and Cres.' a. i. s. 6. Nestor speaks:—

> I'll hide my silver beard in a gold beaver,
> And in my vantbrace put this wither'd brawn.

And see Fairfax, b. xx. st. 139:—"Greves," armour for the legs. 1 Sam. xvii. 6:—"And he had greves of brass upon his legs." "Gauntlet," an iron glove. 'Hen. IV.' p. 11. a. i. s. 3. old Northumberland speaks:—

> Hence therefore, thou nice crutch;
> A scaly gauntlet now, with joints of steel,
> Must glove this hand. NEWTON.

[147] Ver. 1122. *A weaver's beam.* As the spear of Goliath was.—T. WARTON.

[148] Ibid. *And seven-times-folded shield.* As was Ajax's. Ovid, 'Met.' xiii. 2:—"Clypei dominus septemplicis."—NEWTON.

[149] Ver. 1134. *Arm'd thee or charm'd thee strong.* Mr. Thyer here observes, it is very probable that Milton adopted this notion from the Italian epics, who are very full of enchanted arms, and sometimes represent their heroes invulnerable by this art. But, as Mr. Warton remarks, the poet's idea is immediately and particularly taken from the ritual of the combat in chivalry. See 'Comus,' v. 647. Samson replies,—

> I know no spells, use no forbidden arts;
> My trust is in the living God.

Here, it must be observed, is a direct allusion to the oath taken before the judges of the combat, by the champions:—"I do swear, that I have not upon me, nor on any of the arms I shall use, words, charms, or enchantments, to which I trust for help to conquer my enemy; but that I do only trust in God, in my right, and in the strength of my body and arms." Cockburn's 'Hist. of Duels,' p. 115. The poet here says "black enchantments," in like manner as Machin, introducing the same ancient oath in his 'Dumb Knight,' 1633. "Here you shall swear," &c.—

> That here you stand not arm'd with any guile
> Of philters, charms, of night-spells, characters,
> And other black infernal vantages.

Milton's Harapha, as Mr. Warton observes, is as much a Gothic giant as any in Amadis de Gaul; and, like a Gothic giant, engages in a just cause against a virtuous champion. —Todd.

[150] Ver. 1138. *Or ruffled porcupines.* Who can doubt that Milton here had Shakspeare in mind? 'Hamlet,' a. i. s. 8:—

> And each particular hair to stand on end,
> Like quills upon the fretful porcupine. Newton.

[151] Ver. 1161. *There to grind*
Among the slaves and asses, thy comrades.

There can be no doubt that Milton had here Apuleius's description of a pistrinum in his mind. See 'Met.' ix. ad init. where the ass, who is the speaker, says,—"Jam de meo jumentario contubernio quid, vel ad quem modum, memorem?"—Dunster.

[152] Ver. 1196. *Under pretence of bridal friends.* The attendant young men at Samson's marriage are said to have belonged to his wife's family, and not to have been,

as was usual, his own relations or acquaintance. Josephus relates, that, under the pretence of honour, they sent these thirty companions to watch over him, lest he should commit any disturbance.—Todd.

[153] Ver. 1220. *Answer thy appellant.* Thy challenger. The defendant, in like manner, signifies the person challenged. Thus, in Shakspeare's 'King Henry VI.' p. ii. a. ii. s. 3 :—

> This is the day appointed for the combat;
> And ready are the appellant and defendant,
> The armourer and his man. Todd.

[154] Ver. 1222. *Who now defies thee thrice.* This was the custom and the law of arms, to give the challenge and to sound the trumpet thrice. In allusion to the same practice, Edgar appears, to fight with the Bastard, "by the third sound of the trumpet," King Lear, a. v. s. 7.—Newton.

[155] Ver. 1231. *O Baal-zebub.* He is properly made to invoke Baal-zebub, as afterwards to swear by Astaroth; that is, the deities of the Philistines and neighbouring nations.—Newton.

[156] Ver. 1242. *Ere long thou shalt lament*
These braveries, &c.

This connects Harapha with the business of the drama, by making his revenge for the threatening and contemptuous language of Samson the cause, why the latter is to be brought before the public assembly to make sport for them.—Dunster.

[157] Ver. 1248. *Father of five sons,* &c. The story of Goliath of Gath is very well known; and the other four are mentioned 2 Sam. xxi. 15—22 :—"These four were

born to the giant [or to Harapha] in Gath, and fell by the hand of David and by the hand of his servants."—NEWTON.

[158] Ver. 1288. *Of saints.* The fanatical language of the republican party.—DUNSTER.

[159] Ver. 1347.

Perhaps thou shalt have cause to sorrow indeed.

Here the catastrophe is anticipated, as before, v. 1266 :—

It may with mine
Draw their own ruin who attempt the deed.

And such anticipations are usual with the best dramatic writers, who, knowing their own plan, open it by degrees, and drop such hints as cannot be perfectly comprehended, till they are fully explained by the event. The speaker himself can only be supposed to have some general meaning, and not a distinct conception of all the particulars; somewhat like the high-priest in the Gospel, who prophesied without his knowing it.—NEWTON.

[160] Ver. 1377. *Yet that he may dispense,* &c. Milton here probably had in view the story of Naaman the Syrian begging a dispensation of this sort from Elisha, which he seemingly grants him. See 2 Kings, v. 18, 19.—THYER.

[161] Ver. 1384. *I with this messenger will go along.* With what messenger? It was not expressly said before that the messenger was coming: it was implied indeed in what the Chorus had said :—

How thou wilt here come off surmounts my reach:

and this might very well be understood by a man, who could see the messenger coming as well as the Chorus; but seems hardly a sufficient intimation to a blind man, unless

we suppose him to know that the messenger was coming by the same impulse, that he felt rousing him to something extraordinary—Newton.

But the Chorus had also said, v. 1352, after the officer is departed,—"Expect another message more imperious," &c. these words of Samson may perhaps be considered, therefore, as an expectation of the return of the officer, and his determination how to act accordingly.—Todd.

[162] Ver. 1387. *If there be aught of presage in the mind.* This change of purpose, from a sudden internal presage of the mind, is magnificently imagined, and the hinge on which the whole catastrophe turns.

[163] Ver. 1404. *Masters' commands*, &c. This was a feint; but it had betrayed itself had it not been covered by v. 1408:—

Yet this be sure, &c. Warburton.

But this last passage must have been intended by the author to be addressed only to the Chorus: the officer certainly answers Samson's speech, as if he had not heard these words: and as to the verses 1404 and 1405 before us, they are in fact so far from being a feint, that they are marked with the most indignant spirit of irony; indeed so palpable, as to require what follows ("And for a life," &c.) to soften it down to the messenger.—Dunster.

[164] Ver. 1418. *Lords are lordliest in their wine*, &c. Milton here insinuates, that holydays are of heathen institution. The passage is a concealed attack on the church of England: but he first expresses his contempt of a nobility, and an opulent clergy, that is, lords both spiritual and temporal, who by no means coincided with his levelling and narrow principles of republicanism and Calvinism; and whom he tacitly compares with the lords and priests of the idol Dagon.—T. Warton.

[165] Ver. 1427. *Go, and the Holy One.* This, and the thirteen following lines, are in the highest strain of divine poetry; and such as no one but Milton could have written.

[166] Ver. 1463.

That part most reverenced Dagon and his priests.

Milton, I doubt not, in this place indulges that inveterate spleen, which he always had against public and established religion: he might also perhaps, in this description of Manoah's application for Samson's deliverance, glance at his own case after the Restoration.—THYER.

[167] Ver. 1464. *Others more moderate seeming*, &c. The presbyterian party, who had joined the royalists and courtiers.—DUNSTER.

[168] Ver. 1472. *It tore the sky.* So, in 'Paradise Lost,' b. i. 542:—

A shout that tore hell's concave:

Which Pope has copied, 'Iliad' xiii. 1059:—

A shout that tore heaven's concave. TODD.

[169] Ver. 1490. *It shall be my delight*, &c. The character of a fond parent is extremely well supported in the person of Manoah quite through the whole performance; but there is in my opinion something particularly natural and moving in this speech. The circumstance of the old man's feeding and soothing his fancy with the thoughts of tending his son, and contemplating him, ennobled with so many famous exploits, is vastly expressive of the doting fondness of an old father. Nor is the poet less to be admired for his making Manoah, under the influence of this pleasing imagination, go on still farther, and flatter himself even with the hopes of God's restoring his eyes again. Hope as naturally arises in the mind in such a situation, as doubts and

fears do when it is overclouded with gloominess and melancholy.—THYER.

[170] Ver. 1504.

Thy hopes are not ill founded, nor seem vain
Of his delivery.

This is very proper, and becoming the gravity of the Chorus, as much as to intimate that his other hopes were fond and extravagant: and the art of the poet cannot be sufficiently admired, in raising the hopes and expectations of his persons to the highest pitch, just before the dreadful catastróphe. How great and how sudden is the change from good to bad! the one renders the other more striking and affecting.—NEWTON.

[171] Ver. 1508. *And—O, what noise!* &c. It must be very pleasing to the reader to observe with what art and judgment Milton prepares him for the relation of the catastrophe of this tragedy. This abrupt start of Manoah upon hearing the hideous noise, and the description of it by the Chorus in their answer, in terms so full of dread and terror, naturally fill the mind with a presaging horror proper for the occasion: this is still kept up by their suspense and reasoning about it, and at last raised to a proper pitch by the frighted and distracted manner of the messenger's coming in, and his hesitation and backwardness in telling what had happened. What gives it the greater strength and beauty, is the sudden transition from that soothing and flattering prospect, with which Manoah was entertaining his thoughts, to a scene so totally opposite.—THYER.

Nothing can be more impressive, more calculated to excite pity, than the revolution of Samson's fate, which is now developed: for, as a learned writer observes, "while every thing appears tending to his release, a horrible crash announces his destruction." See Harris's 'Philolog. Inq.' part ii. p. 209.—TODD.

[172] Ver. 1512. *Inhabitation.* Οἰκουμένη.—RICHARDSON.

[173] Ver. 1521. *Best keep together here, lest,* &c. In this passage, as is constantly the practice of Sophocles and Euripides, a reason is assigned for the Chorus continuing on the stage. There should always be a reason for the exit and entrance of every person in the drama.—Jos. WARTON.

[174] Ver. 1527. *What if, his eye-sight,* &c. The Chorus here entertains the same pleasing hope of Samson's eye-sight being by miracle restored, which he had before tacitly reproved in Manoah; and Manoah, who had before encouraged the same hope in himself, now desponds, and reckons it presumptuous in another. Such changes of our thoughts are natural and common, especially in any change of our situation and circumstances. Fear and hope usually succeed each other, like ague and fever: and it was not a slight observation of mankind that could have enabled Milton to have understood and described the human passions so exactly.—NEWTON.

[175] Ver. 1538. *For evil news rides post.* So, in Statius:—

> Spargitur in turmas solito pernicior index,
> Cum lugenda refert. TODD.

[176] Ver. 1565. *I refrain,* &c. The reader cannot fail to observe and to feel the art of the poet in very gradually unfolding the catastrophe.—Jos. WARTON.

[177] Ver. 1576. *Abortive as the first-born bloom of spring.* As Mr. Thyer says, this similitude is to be admired for its remarkable justness and propriety: one cannot possibly imagine a more exact and perfect image of the dawning hope, which Manoah had conceived from the favourable answer he had met with from some of the Philistian lords, and of its being so suddenly extinguished by this return of

ill fortune, than that of the early bloom, which the warmth of a few fine days frequently pushes forward in the spring, and then it is cut off by an unexpected return of winterly weather. As Mr. Warburton observes, this beautiful passage seems to be taken from Shakspeare, 'Henry VIII.' a. iii. s. 2:—

> This is the state of man: to-day he puts forth
> The tender leaves of hope; to-morrow blossoms,
> And bears his blushing honours thick upon him:
> The third day, comes a frost, a killing frost;
> And, when he thinks, good easy man, full surely
> His greatness is a-ripening, nips his root;
> And then he falls, as I do.

Upon which, Mr. Warburton remarks, that as spring-frosts are not injurious to the roots of fruit-trees, he should imagine the poet wrote "shoot;" that is, the tender shoot on which are the young leaves and blossoms. The comparison, as well as expression of "nips," is juster too in this reading. Shakspeare has the same thought in 'Love's Labour's Lost:'—

> Byron is like an envious sneaping frost,
> That bites the first-born infants of the spring.
>
> NEWTON.

See also 'Titus Andronicus,' a. iv. s. 4:—

> These tidings nip me, and I hang the head,
> As flowers with frost, or grass beat down with storms.
>
> TODD.

I think this comparison, though poetical in itself, is out of place, as coming from Manoah in his state of distraction.

[178] Ver. 1596. *Occasions drew me early to this city.* As I observed before, that Milton had, with great art, excited the reader's attention to this grand event, so here he is no less careful to gratify it by the relation. It is circumstantial, as the importance of it required; but not so as to be tedious, or too long to delay our expectation. It would be

found difficult, I believe, to retrench one article without making it defective, or to add one which should not appear redundant. The picture of Samson in particular, "with head inclined and eyes fix'd," as if he was addressing himself to that God, who had given him such a measure of strength, and was summing up all his force and resolution, has a very fine effect upon the imagination. Milton is no less happy in the sublimity of his description of this grand exploit, than judicious in the choice of the circumstances preceding it. The poetry rises as the subject becomes more interesting; and one may without rant or extravagance say, that the poet seems to exert no less force of genius in describing, than Samson does strength of body in executing. —THYER.

[179] Ver. 1605.

The building was a spacious theatre
Half-round, on two main pillars vaulted high, &c.

Milton has finely accounted for this dreadful catastrophe, and has with great judgment obviated the common objection. It is commonly asked, how so great a building, containing so many thousands of people, could rest upon two pillars placed so near together; and to this it is answered, that instances are not wanting of far more large and capacious buildings than this, that have been supported only by one pillar. Particularly, Pliny, in the fifteenth chapter of the thirty-sixth book of his 'Natural History,' mentions two theatres built by one C. Curio, who lived in Julius Cæsar's time; each of which was supported only by one pillar, or pin, or hinge, though very many thousands of people did sit in it together. See Poole's 'Annotations.' Mr. Thyer farther adds, that Dr. Shaw, in his 'Travels,' observing upon the eastern method of building, says, that the place where they exhibit their diversions at this day is an advanced cloister, made in the fashion of a large penthouse, supported only by one or two contiguous pillars in

the front, or else at the centre; and that, upon a supposition therefore, that, in the house of Dagon, there was a cloistered structure of this kind, the pulling down the front or centre pillars only which supported it would be attended with the like catastrophe that happened to the Philistines. See Shaw's 'Travels,' p. 283.—NEWTON.

[180] Ver. 1619. *Cataphracts.* That is, men and horses in armour. "Cataphracti equites dicuntur, qui et ipsi ferro muniti sunt, et equos similiter munitos habent." Servius in Virg. Æn. xi. 770. The word had been before employed in English poetry. See Lisle's 'Faire Æthiopian,' 4to. 1631. p. 150:—

> The archers follow nimble, and arm'd light:
> And after them came other bowes and slings, &c.
> His strong phalanges march on either side;
> And troopes of cataphracts before him ride. TODD.

[181] Ver. 1634. *That to the arched roof gave main support.* Milton, we see, retains, in his last production, his early attachment to this kind of ancient architecture. Thus, in his 'Ode Nativ.' st. xix. "Runs through the arched roof," &c.: again, in 'Il Pens.' v. 157. "And love the high embowed roof:" see also 'Par. Lost,' b. i. 726. "From the arch'd roof," &c. I must observe, however, that Quarles, in his poetical 'Hist. of Samson,' relates the same circumstance of the building in which Samson displayed his strength, and fell, edit. 1632, p. 378:—

> her arched roofe was all
> Builded with massie stone. TODD.

[182] Ver. 1637. *And eyes fast fix'd he stood.* Samson having had his eyes put out, this only means to describe his attitude, by his countenance being fixed on the ground, as it must be when "his head was inclined." "Eyes fast fix'd" is a classical phrase.—DUNSTER.

[183] Ver. 1645. *As with amaze shall strike all who behold.* I am not without a painful suspicion, that there is an intended pun in the word "strike." It too much resembles the language of the evil angels, in the sixth book of 'Paradise Lost,' on producing their artillery, and witnessing the successful effect of it.—DUNSTER.

[184] Ver. 1660. *O dearly-bought revenge,* &c. It is judicious to make the Chorus and Semi-Chorus speak after this dreadful account of Samson's death, and not his father Manoah, who makes no answer till after a considerable pause; as he may be supposed to be struck dumb with the unexpected event.—Jos. WARTON.

[185] Ver. 1664. *Self-kill'd,*
Not willingly.

"This suicide of Samson," says a learned author, "was of that nature, which respects not self immediately, or primarily seeks to compass its own death. Had Samson only sought his own death, he would probably have found means of destroying himself in prison, before he was brought forth to be made a show and a spectacle: but a renewal of the glory of God in the destruction of the Philistines was his principal object; which glory had been apparently violated by their general usage of his servant Samson, and the particular indignity they had made him suffer in the loss of his eyes. His own death was an accidental circumstance connected with his point in view, but not the first and direct aim of the action. It was necessary indeed for him to put his own life into the utmost hazard, with scarce a possibility of escape; but he cheerfully submitted to fall with his enemies, rather than not accomplish his great design." Moore's 'Full Inquiry into the subject of Suicide,' vol. i. p. 89.—TODD.

[186] Ver. 1667. *In number more*
Than all thy life had slain before.

"So the dead which he slew at his death, were more than they which he slew in his life," Judges xvi. 30.—NEWTON.

[187] Ver. 1670. *Drunk with idolatry, drunk with wine.* This distinction of drunkenness is scriptural. See Isaiah xxix. 9.—DUNSTER.

[188] Ver. 1674. *In Silo.* Where the tabernacle and ark were at that time.—NEWTON.

[189] Ver. 1682. *So fond are mortal men,* &c. Agreeable to the common maxim, "Quos Deus vult perdere, dementat prius."—THYER.

[190] Ver. 1692. *And as an evening dragon came,* &c. Mr. Calton says that Milton certainly dictated

And not as an evening dragon came.

Samson did not set upon them like an evening dragon, but darted ruin on their heads, like the thunder-bearing eagle. Mr. Sympson, to the same purpose, proposes to read

And not as evening dragon came,
——— but as an eagle, &c.

Mr. Thyer understands it otherwise, and explains it without any alteration of the text, to which I rather incline. One might produce, says he, authorities enough from the naturalists, to show that serpents devour fowls: that of Aldrovandus is sufficient, and serves fully to justify this simile. Speaking of the food of serpents, he says, "Etenim aves, et potissimum avium pullos in nidis adhuc degentes libenter furantur." Aldrov. 'de Serp. et Drac.' lib. i. c. 3. It is common enough, among the ancient poets, to meet with several similes brought in to illustrate one action, when one cannot be found that will hold in every circumstance. Milton does the same here; introducing the simile of the dragon merely in allusion to the order in which the

Philistines were placed in the amphitheatre; and the subsequent one of the eagle, to express the rapidity of that vengeance which Samson took of his enemies.—NEWTON.

[191] Ver. 1695. *Villatick fowl.* "Villaticas alites," Plin. lib. xxiii. sect. 17.—RICHARDSON.

[192] Ibid. *But as an eagle*, &c. In the 'Ajax' of Sophocles, it is said, that his enemies, if they saw him appear, would be terrified like birds at the appearance of the vulture or the eagle, v. 167.—JORTIN.

Apuleius describes an eagle, "in prædam superne sese ruere, fulminis vice," Florid. lib. i. ad init. The ancients described heroes of great prowess and activity in war as thunderbolts. See Spanheim 'De Usu et Præstantia Numismatum,' Dissert. v. where he treats of the epithets bestowed on the successors of Alexander, and among others that of "thunderer."—DUNSTER.

[193] Ver. 1699. *Like that self-begotten bird.* The introduction of the phœnix is particularly censured by Dr. Johnson. Tertullian, Ambrose, and others of the Fathers, have however cited the phœnix as a rational argument of a resurrection.—DUNSTER.

[194] Ver. 1700. *Embost.* Probably from the Italian "emboscare," to enclose in a thicket, as Dr. Johnson observes. It appears to have been used by our old poets, as a term of hunting, applied more particularly to the hart.—TODD.

[195] Ver. 1702. *A holocaust.* An entire burnt-offering. Else, generally, only part of the beast was burnt.—RICHARDSON.

[196] Ver. 1706. *Her fame survives*
A secular bird ages of lives.

The construction and meaning of the whole period I conceive to be this:—Virtue, given for lost, like the phœnix consumed and now teemed from out her ashy womb, revives, reflourishes; and though her body die, which was the case of Samson, yet her fame survives a phœnix many ages: for the comma after "survives" in all the editions should be omitted, as Mr. Calton has observed as well as myself. The phœnix, says he, lived a thousand years according to some, and hence it is called here "a secular bird."—"Ergo quoniam sex diebus cuncta Dei opera perfecta sunt; per secula sex, id est, annorum sex millia, manere hoc statu mundum necesse est." Lactantius, 'Div. Inst.' lib. vii. c. 14. The fame of virtue, the Semi-chorus saith, "survives," outlives, this "secular bird" many ages. The comma, which is in all the editions after "survives," breaks the construction.—NEWTON.

[197] Ver. 1708. *No time for lamentation now*, &c. In the 'Hecuba' of Euripides, Hecuba, when she is informed of the heroical death of her daughter Polyxena, after expressing her grief, corrects it with similar reflections, ver. 591.—DUNSTER.

[196] Ver. 1713. *To the sons of Caphtor. Caphtor* it should be, and not *Chaptor*, as in several editions: and the sons of Caphtor are Philistines, originally of the island Caphtor or Crete. The people were called Caphtorim, Cherethim, Ceretim, and afterwards Cretians. A colony of them settled in Palestine, and there went by the name of Philistim. —MEADOWCOURT.

[199] Ver. 1721. *Nothing is here for tears*, &c. The whole of this speech of Manoah is in a high degree pleasing and interesting: from this place to the conclusion it gradually rises in beauty, so as to form one of the most captivating parts of this admirable tragedy.—DUNSTER.

[200] Ver. 1725. *Let us go find the body*, &c. When Sarpedon is slain in the Iliad, Jupiter gives Phœbus a commission to find the body, and have all due obsequies and funeral rites paid it. See 'Il.' xvi. 667, &c. Compare also the rites paid to the corpses of Patroclus and Hector, 'Il.' xviii. xxiv.—DUNSTER.

[201] Ver. 1730.

Will send for all my kindred, all my friends, &c.

This is founded upon what the Scripture saith, Judges xvi. 31. which the poet has finely improved:—"Then his brethren, and all the house of his father, came down and took him, and brought him up, and buried him between Zorah and Ashtaol, in the burying-place of Manoah his father."—NEWTON.

The poet, by "silent obsequy," in this description of the last respect intended to be paid to Samson, alludes to the custom observed at the Jewish funerals; at which all the near relations of the deceased came to the house in their mourning dress, and sat down upon the ground in silence; whilst in another part of the house were heard the voices of mourners, and the sound of instruments, hired for the purpose: these exclamations continued till the rites were performed, when the nearest relations resumed their melancholy posture.—TODD.

[202] Ver. 1736. *With all his trophies hung.* Chivalry was now again in Milton's mind. He might here allude to the custom of hanging the sword, helmet, and armorial ensigns over the tombs of eminent persons.—TODD.

[203] Ver. 1738. *Thither shall all the valiant youth resort.* Mason, who was a great admirer of this tragedy, introduces Caractacus thus consoling himself over the body of his son Arviragus:—

Here in high Mona shall thy noble limbs
Rest in a noble grave; posterity

Shall to thy tomb with annual reverence bring
Sepulchral stones, and pile them to the clouds.
TODD.

[204] Ver. 1745. *All is best, though we oft doubt*, &c. There is a great resemblance betwixt this speech of Milton's Chorus, and that of the Chorus in Æschylus's 'Supplices,' beginning at ver. 90, to ver. 109.—THYER.

[205] Ver. 1757.

With peace and consolation hath dismiss'd,
And calm of mind, all passion spent.

This moral lesson in the conclusion is very fine, and excellently suited to the beginning: for Milton had chosen for the motto to this piece a passage out of Aristotle, which may show what was his design in writing this tragedy, and the sense of which he hath expressed in the preface, that "tragedy is of power, by raising pity and fear, or terrour, to purge the mind of those and such like passions," &c. and he exemplifies it here in Manoah and the Chorus, after their various agitations of passion, acquiescing in the divine dispensations, and thereby inculcating a most instructive lesson to the reader.—NEWTON.

Of the general character of this poem it may be proper to cite the opinions of my predecessors.

'Samson Agonistes' is the only tragedy that Milton finished, though he sketched out the plans of several, and proposed the subjects of more, in his manuscript preserved in Trinity College, Cambridge: and we may suppose that he was determined to the choice of this particular subject by the similitude of his own circumstances to those of Samson blind and among the Philistines. This I conceive to be the last of his poetical pieces; and it is written in the

very spirit of the ancients, and equals, if not exceeds, any of the most perfect tragedies which were ever exhibited on the Athenian stage, when Greece was in its glory. As this work was never intended for the stage, the division into acts and scenes is omitted. Bishop Atterbury had an intention of getting Pope to divide it into acts and scenes, and of having it acted at Westminster; but his commitment to the Tower put an end to that design. It has since been brought upon the stage in the form of an Oratorio; and Handel's music is never employed to greater advantage, than when it is adapted to Milton's words. That great artist has done equal justice to our author's 'L'Allegro' and 'Il Penseroso;' as if the same spirit possessed both masters, and as if the god of music and of verse was still one and the same.—NEWTON.

'Samson Agonistes' is but a very indifferent subject for a dramatic fable: however, Milton has made the best of it. He seems to have chosen it for the sake of the satire on bad wives.—WARBURTON.

It would be hardly less absurd to say, that he chose the subject of 'Paradise Lost' for the sake of describing a connubial altercation. The nephew of Milton has told us, that he could not ascertain the time when this drama was written; but it probably flowed from the heart of the indignant poet soon after his spirit had been wounded by the calamitous destiny of his friends, to which he alludes with so much energy and pathos, in the chorus, v. 652, &c. He did not design the drama for a theatre, nor has it the kind of action requisite for theatrical interest; but in one point of view the 'Samson Agonistes' is the most singularly affecting composition that was ever produced by sensibility of heart and vigour of imagination. To give it this particular effect, we must remember, that the lot of Milton had a marvellous coincidence with that of his hero

in three remarkable points: first, (but we should regard this as the most inconsiderable article of resemblance) he had been tormented by a beautiful, but disaffectionate and disobedient wife; secondly, he had been the great champion of his country, and as such the idol of public admiration; lastly, he had fallen from that height of unrivalled glory, and had experienced the most humiliating reverse of fortune. In delineating the greater part of Samson's sensations under calamity, he had only to describe his own. No dramatist can have ever conformed so literally as Milton to the Horatian precept, *Si vis me flere*, &c. and if, in reading the 'Samson Agonistes,' we observe how many passages, expressed with the most energetic sensibility, exhibit to our fancy the sufferings and real sentiments of the poet, as well as those of his hero, we may derive from this extraordinary composition a kind of pathetic delight, that no other drama can afford; we may applaud the felicity of genius, that contrived, in this manner, to relieve a heart overburdened with anguish and indignation, and to pay a half-concealed, yet hallowed tribute, to the memories of dear though dishonoured friends, whom the state of the times allowed not the afflicted poet more openly to deplore.—HAYLEY.

Dr. Johnson thought differently about this tragedy, written evidently and happily in the style and manner of Æschylus; and said, "that it was deficient in both requisites of a true Aristotelic middle. Its intermediate parts have neither cause nor consequence, neither hasten nor retard the catastrophe." To which opinion the judicious Mr. Twining accedes. What Dr. Warburton said of it is wonderfully ridiculous, that Milton "chose the subject for the sake of the satire on bad wives;" and that the subjects of 'Samson Agonistes' and 'Paradise Lost' were not very different,—"the fall of two heroes by a woman." Milton, in this drama, has given an example of

every species of measure which the English language is capable of exhibiting, not only in the choruses, but in the dialogue part. The chief parts of the dialogue (though there is a great variety of measure in the choruses of the Greek tragedy) are in iambic verse. I recollect but three places in which hexameter verses are introduced in the Greek tragedies; once in the 'Trachiniæ,' once in the 'Philoctetes' of Sophocles, and once in the 'Troades' of Euripides. Voltaire wrote an opera on this subject of Samson, 1732, which was set to music by Rameau, but was never performed: he has inserted choruses to Venus and Adonis; and the piece finishes by introducing Samson actually pulling down the temple, on the stage, and crushing all the assembly, which Milton has flung into so fine a narration; and the opera is ended by Samson's saying, "J'ai réparé ma honte, et j'expire en vainqueur." And yet this was the man that dared to deride the irregularities of Shakspeare.—Jos. WARTON.

Of the style of this poem, it is to be observed that it is often inexact and almost ungrammatical; and of the metre, that it is very licentious: both with design, and the most consummate judgment. An irregular construction carries with it an air of negligence, well suited to this drama, and yet prevents the expression from falling into vulgarity; and a looseness of measure gives grace and ease to the tragic dialogue: but this apology does not extend to such inaccuracies in the mask of 'Comus;' which, as a work of delight and ostentation, should have been every where laboured, as indeed for the most part it is, into the utmost polish of style and metre. Milton learned the secret he has here so successfully practised from his strict attention to the Greek tragedians, especially Euripides. The modern critics of this poet are perpetually tampering with his careless expression, careless numbers, &c. unconscious that

both were the effect of art. It is on these occasions we may apply the observation,—

It is not Homer nods, but we that dream.

The 'Samson Agonistes' is, in every view, the most artificial and highly finished of all Milton's poetical works.—HURD.

Dr. Warton, in a concluding note on 'Lycidas,' assigns to 'Samson Agonistes' the third place of rank among the poet's works. Lord Monboddo, still more enamoured of its excellencies, says, that it is the "last and the most faultless, in my judgment, of all Milton's poetical works, if not the finest." 'Orig. and Prog. of Language,' 2d edit. vol. iii. p. 71. It is certainly, as Mr. Mason long since observed, an excellent piece, to which posterity has not yet given its full measure of popular and universal fame. "Perhaps," says this judicious writer in a letter to a friend concerning his own impressive tragedy of 'Elfrida,' "in your closet, and that of a few more, who unaffectedly admire genuine nature and ancient simplicity, the 'Agonistes' may hold a distinguished rank: yet surely, we cannot say, in Hamlet's phrase, 'that it pleases the million; it is still caviare to the general.'" 'Elfrida,' edit. 1752. Lett. ii. p. vi. vii.—TODD.

Dr. Johnson has criticised in the 'Rambler,' No. 139, 140, 'Samson Agonistes,' as wanting a middle, though he allows it a beginning and an end. He says,—"The tragedy of 'Samson Agonistes' has been celebrated as the second work of the great author of 'Paradise Lost,' and opposed with all the confidence of triumph to the dramatic performances of other nations. It contains indeed just sentiments, maxims of wisdom, and oracles of piety, and many passages written with the ancient spirit of choral poetry, in

which there is a just and pleasing mixture of Seneca's moral declamation with the wild enthusiasm of the Greek writers: it is therefore worthy of examination, whether a performance, thus illuminated with genius and enriched with learning, is composed according to the indispensable laws of Aristotelian criticism; and, omitting at present all other considerations, whether it exhibits a beginning, a middle, and an end.

"The poem has a beginning and an end which Aristotle himself could not have disapproved; but it must be allowed to want a middle, since nothing passes between the first act and the last, that either hastens or delays the death of Samson. The whole drama, if its superfluities were cut off, would scarcely fill a single act; yet this is the tragedy which ignorance has admired, and bigotry applauded.

"Such are the faults, and such the beauties, of 'Samson Agonistes;' which I have shown with no other purpose than to promote the knowledge of true criticism. The everlasting verdure of Milton's laurels has nothing to fear from the blasts of malignity; nor can such attempt produce any other effect than to strengthen their shoots by lopping their luxuriance."

Cumberland, in his 'Observer,' vol. iv. No. 111, very properly defends the middle of this drama against Johnson's attack. He contends that the captious critic has misunderstood Aristotle's rule; and concludes thus:—

"Of the character, I may say in few words, that Samson possesses all the terrific majesty of Prometheus Chained, the mysterious distress of Œdipus, and the pitiable wretchedness of Philoctetes. His properties, like those of the first, are something above human; his misfortunes, like those of the second, are derivable from the pleasure of Heaven, and involved in oracles; his condition, like that

of the last, is the most abject, which human nature can be reduced to from a state of dignity and splendour.

"Of the catastrophe, there remains only to remark, that it is of unparalleled majesty and terror."

COMUS;

A

MASK,

PRESENTED AT LUDLOW CASTLE, 1634,

BEFORE

JOHN, EARL OF BRIDGEWATER,

THEN PRESIDENT OF WALES.

LUDLOW CASTLE.

Todd has given a copious historical account of this castle, which I shall omit. It had long been the palace of the princes of Wales, and was inhabited by Prince Arthur, eldest son of Henry VII.; it was built by Roger de Montgomery, about 1112. Sir Henry Sidney, when lord president of Wales, expended large sums upon this building. The castle was delivered to the parliament in 1646: the court of marches was afterwards abolished, and the lords presidents discontinued in 1688: from that time the castle fell into decay.

JOHN, EARL OF BRIDGEWATER.

The family of Egerton is of the most undoubted antiquity, and was one of the first of the rank of commoners in Cheshire, being among the barons of the earl palatine of the county at the Conquest. The Cholmondeleys are from the same male stock: the male line of the eldest branch of the family still survives in Sir Philip de Malpas Egerton, bart. but the founder of the nobility of the Bridgewater branch was lord chancellor Egerton, born about 1540. He was a natural son of Sir Richard Egerton of Ridley, who died 1579, son of Sir Ralph Egerton of Ridley, in Cheshire, standard-bearer of England, by an heiress of one of

the Bassets of Blore, in the county of Stafford.* Sir Thomas Egerton was made solicitor-general, 2nd June, 1581; attorney-general, 2nd June, 1592; master of the rolls, 10th April, 36 Eliz.; lord keeper, 6th May, 1596; created baron of Ellesmere, 21st July, 1603, by King James, and three days afterwards constituted lord high chancellor of England; advanced to the dignity of Viscount Brackley, 7th November, 1616; and died full of years and honours, at the age of seventy-seven, on the 15th of March, 1617, and was buried at Doddleston, in the county of Cheshire.†

This is not the place to enter into a long examination of this celebrated man's public character. The late Francis Henry Egerton, the last Earl of Bridgewater, who died in 1829, printed in folio a large collection of materials for his life, of which a great part have been introduced into the last edition of the 'Biographia Britannica.' He was a man remarkable for discretion, sagacity, and wisdom in perilous times; he was the founder of the present system of equity in chancery; and his contest with chief justice Coke, and triumph over the great learning and abilities of that bad-tempered man, is alone matter of high fame. In all the pages of history which have gained any credit, his reputation stands bright and clear: he accumulated a large fortune for his posterity, which was vastly augmented by the illustrious marriage which his son made with Lady Frances Stan-

* The last heiress of the elder branch of the Bassets of Blore married William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle, whose daughter by her married John Egerton, second Earl of Bridgewater.

The ancestor of these Bassets married the heiress of the elder branch of the Byrons. In the church of Blore was the brass plate recording this marriage, when I visited that church in autumn 1789.

† By some extraordinary neglect, no memorial was erected over this great man's remains, till the present learned, accomplished, and amiable Archdeacon Wrangham, the rector of the parish, placed an epitaph at his own expense.

ley, daughter and coheir of Ferdinando, Earl of Derby, and the Lady Alice, before whom Milton's 'Arcades' was acted.

This son John, second Viscount Brackley, was created Earl of Bridgewater 27th May, 1617, two months after his father's death. From this time, this earl was by his marriage lifted at once to the very first and most illustrious rank of nobility. The blood of the Stanleys, Cliffords, Brandons, Wodevilles, Tudors, and Plantagenets, all centred in his children.

In 1631 he was appointed lord president of Wales. "I have been informed from a manuscript of Oldys," says Mr. Warton, "that Lord Bridgewater, being appointed lord president of Wales, entered upon his official residence at Ludlow castle with great solemnity: on this occasion he was attended by a large concourse of the neighbouring nobility and gentry. Among the rest came his children; in particular, Lord Brackley, Mr. Thomas Egerton, and Lady Alice,

> To attend their father's state
> And new-entrusted sceptre.

They had been on a visit at a house of their relations, the Egerton family in Herefordshire; and in passing through Haywood forest were benighted, and the Lady Alice was even lost for a short time. This accident, which in the end was attended with no bad consequences, furnished the subject of a mask for a Michaelmas festivity, and produced 'Comus.' Lord Bridgewater was appointed [rather, as I apprehend, installed] lord president, May 12, 1633. When the perilous adventure in Haywood forest happened, if true, cannot now be told: it must have been soon after. The mask was acted at Michaelmas, 1634." Sir John Hawkins has also observed, that this elegant poem is founded on a real story; his account of which, though less particular, agrees with that of Oldys. 'Hist. of Music,' vol. iv. p. 52. Lawes, in his dedication to Lord Brackley, perhaps alludes to the accident, in stating that the "poem

received its first occasion of birth from himself, and others of his noble family."

This first Earl of Bridgewater died 4th December, 1649, aged seventy: his countess died 11th March, 1635-6, aged fifty-two.*

Of Lady Alice Egerton, the youngest daughter, Warton has given an account.

John Egerton, second Earl of Bridgewater, was the Elder Brother in 'Comus,' under the name of Lord Brackley: he was a man of literature, very studious, very accomplished, and very amiable. Sir Henry Chauncy, in his 'History of Hertfordshire,' has given a very interesting and attractive character, and a lively description of his person. He died 26th October, 1686, aged sixty-four; he was consequently born in 1622. He married Lady Elizabeth Cavendish, daughter of William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle, a lady of incomparable beauty, talents, and virtue; of whose 'Prayers and Meditations,' a manuscript copy has descended to me.† She died 14th June, 1663, aged thirty-seven.

In the epitaphs of these two generations, at Little Gadsden, near Ashridge, there is a singular strain of plaintive eloquence.

The Earl's affection for his wife, and regret for her loss, even till his death,‡ were extreme.§

* His daughter, Lady Catharine, married William Courteen, Esq., son and heir of Sir William Courteen, knight, a merchant of London. See the curious and elaborate lives of the Courteens in the last edition of the 'Biographia Britannica.' The last of them took the name of Charlton, and was a man of scientific fame.

† It is particularised in Todd, p. 208, from my communication.

‡ See, in 'Censura Literaria,' an account of George Withers's 'Hallelujah,' with the manuscript notes of this earl's own copy.

§ I have mentioned the funeral certificate by the heralds:

John, third Earl of Bridgewater, died 23rd May, 1716, aged sixty-one.

His son Scroop, fourth earl, having married Lady Elizabeth Churchill, one of the coheirs of the famous John, Duke of Marlborough, was raised to a dukedom 18th June, 1720: she died however in her twenty-sixth year, before this promotion, on 22nd March, 1714. The duke died 11th January, 1745: his eldest son John, by his marriage with Lady Rachel Russell, succeeded, and died 26th February, 1748, aged twenty-one. He was succeeded by his only brother, Francis, third and last duke, who died unmarried, 1803, aged sixty-seven. This was the celebrated founder of canal navigation.

General John William Egerton, grandson of Henry, bishop of Hereford, who died 1746, fifth son of John, third Earl of Bridgewater, succeeded to the earldom. His father was Bishop of Durham, and married, in 1748, Lady Anne Sophia Gray, daughter of Henry, last Duke of Kent of that family: he died 1823, and was succeeded by his brother, the Rev. Francis Henry Egerton, who died at Paris unmarried, 1829.

Lady Louisa Egerton,* born 30th April, 1723, sister of the whole blood to the last Duke of Bridgewater, married 28th March, 1748, Granville Levison, afterwards Earl Gower, and created Marquis of Stafford, whose son by her,

their inaccuracy is always proverbial. The earl survived his son Thomas a year; yet though the son's marriage and issue are given, no notice is taken of his death. I found it in a memorandum in an account-book of his widow. Afterwards I found, by Clutterbuck's 'History of Hertfordshire,' that he was buried at Little Gadsden, in the family vault. His widow, Esther Busby, survived till 1724.

* The first Duke of Bridgewater had a daughter by his first lady, who first married Wriothesly Russell, third Duke of Bedford, who died, 1732, without issue; and afterwards William Villiers, Earl of Jersey, from which marriage the present Earl of Jersey is descended.

the second Marquis of Stafford, was latterly created Duke of Sutherland, and was father of the present Duke of Sutherland and of Lord Francis Gower, on whom the Duke of Bridgewater entailed a large portion of his immense property, in consequence of which he has now assumed the name of Egerton.

Sophia Egerton, sister of the last two earls, married Sir Abraham Hume, bart., and left two daughters, of whom one married the Earl of Brownlow, and was mother of the present Lord Alford; and the other married Mr. Charles Long, created Lord Farnborough; but without issue.

I would not have gone into these dry genealogical details, if the title had not now disappeared from the modern peerages.

On the illustrious founder of canal navigation, a great national benefactor, it is unnecessary to enlarge: perhaps he did not take the literary turn of his ancestors, which, if not more useful, would have been more congenial to the pursuits which I admire. He was a man of retired, and somewhat eccentric habits; and wrapped up exclusively in the mighty works which he was meditating, and carrying on. He was not a man of visionary talents; and cared little, I believe, about the history of his ancestors, or the glories of past times: he felt no interest in the curious library,* amassed by his forefathers, nor in the long galleries of the portraits of the great chancellor's Elizabethan cotemporaries. His ancient mansion of Ashridge, which before the Reformation had been a monastery, he suffered to fall to decay, inhabiting only a few rooms in the porter's lodge.†

General John Egerton, who succeeded to the earldom and

* From the use of this library Mr. Todd derived a great part of his bibliographical knowledge in old English poetry, and of the predecessors and contemporaries of Milton: many of the volumes had probably gone through the hands of the illustrious poet.

† I visited it in August, 1789, and took a hasty list of the portraits. See 'Topographer,' 1789, 1790, 8vo. four vols.

ancient portion of the Bridgewater estates, inherited none of the old family love of literature. He was of manners chillingly cold, and a reserved pride, mixed with something of concealed sarcasm, which was apt to give great offence: he piqued himself upon his proprieties, and would never do any thing out of rule or fashion: he rebuilt the mansion of Ashridge most magnificently, but was fond of money, and over-thrifty in many of his habits. He never had any children, but left the principal property to his widow for her life, who still enjoys it.

His brother and successor, Francis Henry Egerton, was prebendary of Durham, and rector of the rich family living of Whitchurch in Shropshire. For about twenty of the last years of his life he resided at Paris, having bought the grand hotel of the Ducs de Noailles, between the Rue St. Honoré and the Rue de Rivoli, where he lived at a great expense, and in much pomp. He was a strange man, the reverse of his brother: an admirable classical scholar, a great lover of books, with many flashes of genius, and fitful acts of generosity and munificence: in short, many of his habits were so singular, as only to be accounted for by the obliquities of mental disease. By his will he became a public benefactor, enriching the library of the British Museum, and leaving a large sum to be expended in the authorship and publication of what have since appeared under the title of the 'Bridgewater Treatises.' He delighted in the history of his family and the glory of his ancestors: he caused to be printed a translation of 'Comus' in Italian verse; and was at the expense of many other privately-printed gifts to literature. It cannot be denied that he was both vain and proud: but let his learning, his talents, and acts of public benefit veil his foibles.

Lord Francis Gower, now Egerton, who represents and possesses a magnificent portion of the Bridgewater property, with the library, splendid collection of pictures, and other

reliques, embellishes his descent by his literary accomplishments, his genius, and his devotion to the Muses.

Thus has passed away the male line of this illustrious family.* The length of Mr. Todd's note, in his Milton, upon the subject, has set me an example which will apologize for my substituting in its room another which fills less space. Considering the early connexion of Milton with this house, and that hence came the exquisite mask of 'Comus,' I venture to hope that it will not be deemed irrelevant. Descent is nothing unless it stimulates to accomplish the mind with high decorations, to nurse high pursuits, and to cherish high emotions of the heart. Who sleeps upon his honours—who relies only on reflected glory,—is an imbecile and culpable cipher.

* I believe that only five males are now living, who are half Egertons, viz., whose mothers were Egertons, of whom my brother and myself are two. Lord Francis is only an Egerton by his paternal grandmother; the same is the case with Mr. Egerton of Tatton.

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE[a]

JOHN LORD VISCOUNT BRACLY,

SON AND HEIR APPARENT TO THE EARL OF BRIDGEWATER, &c.[b]

MY LORD,

THIS poem, which received its first occasion of birth from yourself and others of your noble family, and much honour from your own person in the performance, now returns again to make a finall dedication of itself to you. Although not openly acknowledged by the author,[c] yet it is a legitimate offspring, so lovely, and so much desired, that the often copying of it hath tired my pen to give my severall friends satisfaction, and brought me to a necessity of producing it to the publike view; and now to offer it up in all rightfull devotion to those fair hopes, and rare endowments of your much promising youth, which give a full assurance, to all that know you, of a future excellence. Live, sweet Lord, to be the honour of your name, and receive this as your own, from the hands of him, who hath by many favours been long obliged to your most honoured parents; and as in this representation your attendant Thyrsis, so now in all reall expression

Your faithfull and most humble servant,

H. LAWES.[d]

The Copy of a Letter written by Sir Henry Wootton, to the Author, upon the following Poem.

From the Colledge, this 13. of April, 1638.[e]

SIR,

It was a special favour, when you lately bestowed upon me here the first taste of your acquaintance, though no longer then to make me know that I wanted more time to value it, and to enjoy it rightly; and in truth, if I could then have imagined your farther stay in these parts, which I understood afterwards by Mr. H.,[f] I would have been bold, in our vulgar phrase, to mend my draught (for you left me with an extreme thirst) and to have begged your conversation again, joyntly with your said learned friend, at a poor meal or two, that we might have banded together som good authors of the ancient time; among which, I observed you to have been familiar.

Since your going, you have charged me with new obligations, both for a very kinde letter from you dated the sixth of this month, and for a dainty peece of entertainment which came therwith: wherin I should much commend the tragical part,[g] if the lyrical did not ravish me with a certain Dorique delicacy in your songs and odes; wherunto I must plainly confess to have seen yet nothing parallel in our language: *ipsa mollities*.[h] But I must not omit to tell you, that I now onely owe you thanks for intimating unto me (how modestly soever) the true artificer. For the work itself I had viewed som good

while before with singular delight, having received it from our common friend Mr. R.[j] in the very close of the late R.'s poems, printed at Oxford, wherunto it is added (as I now suppose) that the accessory might help out the principal, according to the art of stationers, and to leave the reader *con la bocca dolce*.

Now, sir, concerning your travels, wherin I may chalenge a little more priviledge of discours with you; I suppose you will not blanch Paris in your way; therefore I have been bold to trouble you with a few lines to Mr. M. B.,[k] whom you shall easily find attending the young Lord S.,[l] as his governour; and you may surely receive from him good directions for the shaping of your farther journey into Italy, where he did reside by my choice som time for the king, after mine own recess from Venice.

I should think that your best line would be thorow the whole length of France to Marseilles, and thence by sea to Genoa, whence the passage into Tuscany is as diurnal as a Gravesend barge: I hasten, as you do, to Florence, or Siena, the rather to tell you a short story from the interest you have given me in your safety.

At Siena I was tabled in the house of one Alberto Scipioni, an old Roman courtier in dangerous times, having bin steward to the Duca di Pagliano, who with all his family were strangled, save this onely man that escaped by foresight of the tempest: with him I had often much chat of those affairs; into which he took pleasure to look back from his native harbour; and at my departure toward Rome (which had been the centre of his experience) I had wonn confidence enough to beg his advice, how I might carry myself securely there, without offence of others, or of mine own conscience. *Signor*[m] *Arrigo mio*, sayes he, *I pensieri stretti, et il viso sciolto*, will go safely over the whole world; of which Delphian oracle (for so I have found it) your judgement doth need no commentary; and therefore, sir,

I will commit you with it to the best of all securities, Gods dear love, remaining

Your Friend as much at command
as any of longer date,
HENRY WOOTTON.[n]

POSTSCRIPT.

SIR,

I have expressly sent this my foot-boy to prevent your departure without som acknowledgement from me of the receipt of your obliging Letter, having my self through som busines, I know not how, neglected the ordinary conveyance. In any part where I shall understand you fixed, I shall be glad, and diligent, to entertain you with home-novelties; even for some fomentation of our friendship, too soon interrupted in the cradle.[o]

NOTES

TO THE

DEDICATION TO COMUS.

---

[a] This is the dedication to Lawes's edition of the Mask, 1637, to which the following motto was prefixed, from Virgil's second Eclogue:—

> Eheu! quid volui misero mihi? floribus austrum
> Perditus—

This motto is omitted by Milton himself in the editions of 1645 and 1673.—T. Warton.

This motto is delicately chosen, whether we consider it as being spoken by the author himself, or by the editor. If by the former, the meaning, I suppose, is this:—"I have, by giving way to this publication, let in the breath of public censure on these early blossoms of my poetry, which were before secure in the hands of my friends, as in a private enclosure." If we suppose it to come from the editor, the application is not very different; only to *floribus* we must then give an encomiastic sense. The choice of such a motto, so far from vulgar in itself, and in its application, was worthy Milton.—Hurd.

[b] The first brother in the Mask.—T. Warton.

[c] It never appeared under Milton's name till the year 1645.—T. Warton.

[d] This dedication does not appear in the edition of Milton's poems, printed in 1673, when Lord Brackley, under the title of Earl of Bridgewater, was still living. Milton was perhaps

unwilling to own his early connexions with a family, conspicuous for its unshaken loyalty, and now highly patronised by King Charles II.—T. Warton.

Milton, in his edition of 1673, omitted also the letter written by Sir Henry Wootton: yet it has not been supposed that, by withdrawing the letter, he intended any disrespect to the memory of his learned friend; nor might the dedication perhaps have been withdrawn through any unwillingness to own his early connexions with the Egerton family: it might have been inexpedient for him at that time openly to avow them; but he would not, I think, forget them. He had lived in the neighbourhood of Ashridge, the seat of the Earl of Bridgewater; for his father's house and lands at Horton near Colnbrook, in Buckinghamshire, were held under the earl, before whom 'Comus' was acted. Milton afterwards lived in Barbican, where the earl had great property, as well as his town-residence, Bridgewater-house: and, though Dr. Johnson observes that Milton "had taken a larger house in Barbican for the reception of scholars," it is not improbable that he might have been accommodated with it rent-free, by that nobleman, who, it may be supposed, would gladly embrace an opportunity of having in his neighbourhood the admirable author of 'Comus,' and of promoting his acquaintance with that finished scholar, who, being "willing," says his nephew Phillips, "to impart his learning and knowledge to his relations, and the sons of gentlemen who were his intimate friends," might afford to his family at least the pleasure of his conversation, if not to some of them the advantage of his instruction. This dedication does not appear in Tickell's and Fenton's editions of Milton's poetical works. It was restored by Dr. Newton.—Todd.

Henry Lawes, who composed the music for 'Comus,' and performed the combined characters of the Spirit and the shepherd Thyrsis in this drama, was the son of Thomas Lawes, a vicar choral of Salisbury cathedral: he was perhaps at first a choir-boy of that church. With his brother William, he was educated in music under Giovanni Coperario, (supposed by Fenton, in his notes on Waller, to be an Italian, but really an Englishman under the plain name of John Cooper) at the expense of Edward, Earl of Hertford. In January, 1625, he was appointed pistoler, or epistoler, of the royal chapel; in

November following he became one of the gentlemen of the choir of that chapel; and soon afterwards, clerk of the cheque, and one of the court-musicians to King Charles I.

Cromwell's usurpation put an end to masks and music: and Lawes, being dispossessed of all his appointments, by men who despised and discouraged the elegances and ornaments of life, chiefly employed that gloomy period in teaching a few young ladies to sing and play on the lute. Yet he was still greatly respected: for before the troubles began, his irreproachable life, ingenuous deportment, engaging manners, and liberal connexions, had not only established his character, but raised even the credit of his profession. Wood says, that his most beneficent friends, during his sufferings for the royal cause, in the rebellion and afterwards, were the ladies Alice and Mary, the Earl of Bridgewater's daughters before mentioned: but in the year 1660, he was restored to his places and practice; and had the happiness to compose the coronation anthem for the exiled monarch. He died in 1662, and was buried in Westminster-abbey. Of all the testimonies paid to his merit by his contemporaries, Milton's commendation in the thirteenth Sonnet, and in some of the speeches of 'Comus,' must be esteemed the most honourable: and Milton's praise is likely to be founded on truth. Milton was no specious or occasional flatterer; and at the same time, was a skilful performer on the organ, and a judge of music: and it appears probable, that even throughout the rebellion, he had continued his friendship for Lawes; for, long after the king was restored, he added the sonnet to Lawes in the new edition of his Poems, printed under his own direction, in 1673. Nor has our author only complimented Lawes's excellences in music; for in 'Comus,' having said that Thyrsis, with his "soft pipe," and "smooth-dittied song," could "still the roaring winds and hush the waving woods," he adds, v. 88, "nor of less faith:" and he joins his worth with his skill, Son. xiii. v. 5.—Todd.

[e] *April*, 1638. Milton had communicated to Sir Henry his design of seeing foreign countries, and had sent him his 'Mask.' He set out on his travels soon after the receipt of this letter. See the account of his life.—Todd.

[f] *Mr. H.* Mr. Warton, in his first edition of 'Comus,'

says, that Mr. H. was "perhaps Milton's friend, Samuel Hartlib, whom I have seen mentioned in some of the pamphlets of this period, as well acquainted with Sir Henry Wootton:" but this is omitted in the second edition. Mr. Warton perhaps doubted his conjecture of the person. I venture to state, from a copy of the 'Reliquiæ Wottonianæ' in my possession, in which a few notes are written, (probably soon after the publication of the book, 3rd edit. in 1672) that the person intended was the "ever-memorable" John Hales. This information will be supported by the reader's recollecting Sir Henry's intimacy with Mr. Hales; of whom Sir Henry says, in one of his letters, that he gave to his learned friend the title of *bibliotheca ambulans*, "the walking library." See 'Reliq. Wotton.' 3rd edit. p. 475.—Todd.

g *The tragical part.* Sir Henry, now provost of Eton college, was himself a writer of English odes, and with some degree of elegance: he had also written a tragedy, while a young student at Queen's-college, Oxford, called 'Tancredo,' acted by his fellow-students. See his 'Life,' by Walton, p. 11. He was certainly a polite scholar, but on the whole a mixed and desultory character: he was now indulging his studious and philosophic propensities at leisure. Milton, when this letter was written, lived but a few miles from Eton.—T. Warton.

h *Ipsa mollities.* Thus Fletcher's 'Faithful Shepherdess' is characterised by Cartwright, "where softness reigns." Poems, p. 209. ed. 1651. But Sir Henry's conceptions did not reach to the higher poetry of 'Comus:' he was rather struck with the pastoral mellifluence of its lyric measures, which he styles "a certain Dorique delicacy in the songs and odes," than with its graver and more majestic tones, with the solemnity and variety of its peculiar vein of original invention. This drama was not to be generally characterised by its songs and odes: nor do I know that softness and sweetness, although they want neither, are particularly characteristical of those passages, which are most commonly rough with strong and crowded images, and rich in personification. However, the song to Echo, and the initial strains of Comus's invitation, are much in the style which Wootton describes.—T. Warton.

i *Mr. R.* I believe "Mr. R." to be John Rouse, Bodley's

librarian. "The late R." is unquestionably Thomas Randolph, the poet.—T. WARTON.

[k] *Mr. M. B.* Mr. Michael Branthwaite, as I suppose; of whom Sir Henry thus speaks in one of his letters, 'Reliq. Wotton.' 3rd edit. p. 546:—"Mr. Michael Branthwait, heretofore his majestie's agent in Venice, a gentleman of approved confidence and sincerity."—TODD.

[l] *Lord S.* The son of Lord Viscount Scudamore, then the English ambassador at Paris, by whose notice Milton was honoured, and by whom he was introduced to Grotius, then residing at Paris also, as the minister of Sweden.—TODD.

[m] *Signor*, &c. Sir Henry seems to have been very fond of recommending this advice to his friends, who were about to travel. See 'Reliq. Wotton.' 3d edit. p. 356, where he relates to another correspondent his intimacy with Scipioni, and his maxim, "*Gli pensieri stretti, et il viso sciolto:* that is, as I use to translate it, 'Your thoughts close, and your countenance loose.' This was that moral antidote which I imparted to Mr. B. and his fellow-travellers, having a particular interest in their well-doings." Milton, however, neglecting to observe the maxim, incurred great danger, by disputing against the superstition of the church of Rome within the verge of the Vatican.—TODD.

[n] Milton mentions this letter of Sir Henry Wootton for its elegance, in his 'Defensio secunda populi Anglicani.'—T. WARTON.

[o] *In the cradle.* He should have said "in its cradle." See the beginning of the letter.—T. WARTON.

ORIGIN OF COMUS.

In Fletcher's 'Faithful Shepherdess,' an Arcadian comedy recently published, Milton found many touches of pastoral and superstitious imagery, congenial with his own conceptions: many of these, yet with the highest improvements, he has transferred into 'Comus;' together with the general cast and colouring of the piece. He catched also from the lyric rhymes of Fletcher, that Doric delicacy, with which Sir Henry Wootton was so much delighted in the songs of Milton's drama. Fletcher's comedy was coldly received the first night of its performance: but it had ample revenge in this conspicuous and indisputable mark of Milton's approbation: it was afterwards represented as a mask at court, before the king and queen on Twelfth Night, in 1633. I know not, indeed, if this was any recommendation to Milton; who, in the 'Paradise Lost,' speaks contemptuously of these interludes, which had been among the chief diversions of an elegant and liberal monarch, b. iv. 767:—

court-amours,
Mix'd dance, and wanton mask, or midnight ball, &c.

And in his 'Ready and easy Way to establish a free Commonwealth,' written in 1660, on the inconveniences and dangers of readmitting kingship, and with a view to counteract the noxious humour of returning to bondage, he says, "A king must be adored as a demi-god, with a dissolute and haughty court about him, of vast expense and luxury,

masks and revels, to the debauching our prime gentry, both male and female, not in their pastimes only," &c. 'Pr. W.' i. 590. I believe the whole compliment was paid to the genius of Fletcher: but in the mean time it should be remembered, that Milton had not yet contracted an aversion to courts and court-amusements; and that, in 'L'Allegro,' masks are among his pleasures: nor could he now disapprove of a species of entertainment, to which, as a writer, he was giving encouragement. The royal masks did not, however, like 'Comus,' always abound with platonic recommendations of the doctrine of chastity.

The ingenious and accurate Mr. Reed has pointed out a rude outline, from which Milton seems partly to have sketched the plan of the fable of 'Comus.' See 'Biograph. Dramat.' ii. p. 441. It is an old play, with this title, "The old Wives Tale, a pleasant conceited Comedie, plaied by the Queenes Maiesties players. Written by G. P. [i. e. George Peele.] Printed at London by John Danter, and are to be sold by Ralph Hancocke and John Hardie, 1595." In quarto. This very scarce and curious piece exhibits, among other parallel incidents, two brothers wandering in quest of their sister, whom an enchanter had imprisoned. This magician had learned his art from his mother Meroe, as Comus had been instructed by his mother Circe: the brothers call out on the lady's name, and Echo replies: the enchanter had given her a potion which suspends the powers of reason, and superinduces oblivion of herself: the brothers afterwards meet with an old man who is also skilled in magic; and, by listening to his soothsayings, they recover their lost sister; but not till the enchanter's wreath had been torn from his head, his sword wrested from his hand, a glass broken, and a light extinguished. The names of some of the characters, as Sacrapant, Chorebus, and others, are taken from the 'Orlando Furioso.' The history of Meroe, a witch, may be seen in 'The xi Bookes of the Golden Asse, containing the Meta-

morphosie of Lucius Apuleius, interlaced with sundrie pleasant and delectable Tales, &c. Translated out of Latin into English by William Adlington. Lond. 1566.' See chap. iii. "How Socrates in his return from Macedony to Larissa was spoyled and robbed, and how he fell acquainted with one Meroe a witch." And chap. iv. "How Meroe the witch turned divers persons into miserable beasts." Of this book there were other editions, in 1571, 1596, 1600, and 1639, all in quarto and the black letter. The translator was of University-college. See also Apuleius in the original. A Meroe is mentioned by Ausonius, Epigr. xix.

Peele's play opens thus:—Anticke, Frolicke, and Fantasticke, three adventurers, are lost in a wood, in the night. They agree to sing the old song,

> Three merrie men, and three merrie men,
> And three merrie men be wee;
> I in the wood, and thou on the ground,
> And Jack sleeps in the tree.

They hear a dog, and fancy themselves to be near some village. A cottager appears, with a lantern: on which Frolicke says, "I perceiue the glimryng of a gloworme, a candle, or a cats-eye," &c. They intreat him to show the way; otherwise, they say, "wee are like to wander among the owlets and hobgoblins of the forest." He invites them to his cottage; and orders his wife to "lay a crab in the fire, to rost for lambes-wool," &c. They sing

> When as the rie reach to the chin,
> And chop cherrie, chop cherrie ripe within;
> Strawberries swimming in the creame,
> And schoole-boyes playing in the streame, &c.

At length, to pass the time trimly, it is proposed that the wife shall tell "a merry winters tale," or, "an old wiues winters tale;" of which sort of stories she is not without a score. She begins:—There was a king, or duke, who had

a most beautiful daughter, and she was stolen away by a necromancer; who, turning himself into a dragon, carried her in his mouth to his castle. The king sent out all his men to find his daughter; "at last, all the king's men went out so long, that hir Two Brothers went to seeke hir." Immediately the two brothers enter, and speak,

> First Br. Vpon these chalkie cliffs of Albion,
> We are arriued now with tedious toile, &c.
> To seek our sister, &c.

A soothsayer enters, with whom they converse about the lost lady. *Sooths.* Was she fayre? *2nd Br.* The fayrest for white and the purest for redde, as the blood of the deare or the driven snowe, &c. In their search, Echo replies to their call: they find, too late, that their sister is under the captivity of a wicked magician, and that she had tasted his cup of oblivion. In the close, after the wreath is torn from the magician's head, and he is disarmed and killed by a spirit in the shape and character of a beautiful page of fifteen years old, she still remains subject to the magician's enchantment: but in a subsequent scene the spirit enters, and declares, that the sister cannot be delivered but by a lady, who is neither maid, wife, nor widow. The spirit blows a magical horn, and the lady appears; she dissolves the charm by breaking a glass, and extinguishing a light, as I have before recited. A curtain is withdrawn, and the sister is seen seated and asleep: she is disenchanted and restored to her senses, having been spoken to thrice: she then rejoins her two brothers, with whom she returns home; and the boy-spirit vanishes under the earth. The magician is here called "inchanter vile," as in 'Comus,' v. 907.

There is another circumstance in this play, taken from the old English 'Apuleius.' It is where the old man every night is transformed by our magician into a bear, recovering in the day time his natural shape.

Among the many feats of magic in this play, a bride

newly married gains a marriage-portion by dipping a pitcher into a well: as she dips, there is a voice:—

Faire maiden, white and redde,
Combe me smoothe, and stroke my head,
And thou shall haue some cockell bread!
Gently dippe, but not too deepe,
For feare thou make the golden beard to weepe!
Faire maiden, white and redde,
Combe me smoothe, and stroke my head;
And euery haire a sheaue shall be,
And euery sheaue a golden tree!

With this stage-direction, "A head comes vp full of gold; she combes it into her lap."

I must not omit, that Shakspeare seems also to have had an eye on this play. It is in the scene where "The haruest-men enter with a song." Again, "Enter the haruest-men singing with women in their handes." Frolicke says, "Who have we here, our amourous haruest starres?" They sing,

Loe, here we come a reaping a reaping,
To reape our haruest-fruite;
And thus we passe the yeare so long,
And neuer be we mute.

Compare the mask in the 'Tempest,' a. iv. s. 1. where Iris says,

You sun-burnt sicklemen, of August weary,
Come hither from the furrow, and be merry;
Make holy-day: your rye-straw hats put on,
And these fresh nymphs encounter every one
In country footing.

Where is this stage-direction:—"Enter certain reapers, properly habited: they join with the nymphs in a graceful dance." The 'Tempest' probably did not appear before the year 1612.

That Milton had his eye on this ancient drama, which might have been the favourite of his early youth, perhaps may be at least affirmed with as much credibility, as that he

conceived the 'Paradise Lost' from seeing a mystery at Florence, written by Andreini a Florentine in 1617, entitled 'Adamo.'

In the mean time, it must be confessed, that Milton's magician Comus, with his cup and wand, is ultimately founded on the fable of Circe. The effects of both characters are much the same: they are both to be opposed at first with force and violence. Circe is subdued by the virtues of the herb moly which Mercury gives to Ulysses, and Comus by the plant hæmony which the spirit gives to the two brothers. About the year 1615, a mask, called the 'Inner Temple Masque,' written by William Browne, author of 'Britannia's Pastorals,' which I have frequently cited, was presented by the students of the Inner Temple; lately printed from a manuscript in the library of Emmanuel College: but I have been informed, that a few copies were printed soon after the presentation. It was formed on the story of Circe, and perhaps might have suggested some few hints to Milton. I will give some proofs of parallelism as we go along. The genius of the best poets is often determined, if not directed, by circumstance and accident. It is natural, that even so original a writer as Milton should have been biassed by the reigning poetry of the day, by the composition most in fashion, and by subjects recently brought forward, but soon giving way to others, and almost as soon totally neglected and forgotten.—T. Warton.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

'Comus' is perhaps more familiar to the modern English reader than any other poems of Milton, except 'L'Allegro' and 'Il Penseroso:' its poetical merits are generally felt and acknowledged: its visionary and picturesque inventiveness give it a full title to a prime place in our admiration. Thyer and Warburton both remark that the author has here imitated Shakspeare's manner more than in the rest of his compositions.

The spirits of the air were favourite idols of Milton: he had from early youth become intimately acquainted with all that learning, all that superstition, and all that popular belief had related regarding them; and he had added all that his own rich and creative imagination could combine with it.

It seems that an accidental event, which occurred to the family of his patron, John Egerton, Earl of Bridgewater, then keeping his court at Ludlow Castle, as lord president of Wales, gave birth to this fable. The earl's two sons and daughter, Lady Alice, were benighted, and lost their way in Haywood-forest; and the two brothers, in the attempt to explore their path, left the sister alone, in a track of country rudely inhabited by sets of boors and savage

peasants. On these simple facts the poet raised a superstructure of such fairy spells and poetical delight, as has never since been equalled.

Masks, as I have already remarked, were then in fashion with the court and great nobility; and when the lord president entered upon the state of his new office, this entertainment was properly deemed a splendid mode of recommending himself to the country in the opening of his high function. Milton was the poet on whom Lord Bridgewater would naturally call; the bard having already produced the 'Arcades' for the countess's mother, Lady Derby, at Harefield, in Middlesex.

Comus discovers the beautiful Lady in her forlorn and unprotected state; and, to secure her as a prize for his unprincipled voluptuousness, addresses her in the disguised character of a peasant, offering to conduct her to his own lowly but loyal cottage, until he hears of her stray attendants: meanwhile, the brothers, unable to find their way back to their sister, become dreadfully uneasy lest some harm should befall her: nevertheless, they comfort themselves with the protection which Heaven affords to innocence; but the good Spirit, with whom the poem opens, now enters, and informs them of the character of Comus, and his wicked designs upon their sister. Under his guidance, they rush in on Comus and his crew, who had already carried off the Lady; put them to the rout; and release the captive, imprisoned by their spells, by the counter-spells of Sabrina. She is then carried back to her father's court, received in joy and triumph; and here the Mask ends.

Who but Milton, unless perhaps Shakspeare, could have made this the subject of a thousand lines,—in which not only every verse, but literally every word, is pure and exquisite poetry? Never was there such a copiousness of

picturesque rural images brought together: every epithet is racy, glowing, beautiful, and appropriate. But this is not all:—the sentiments are tender, or lofty, refined, philosophical, virtuous, and wise. The chaste and graceful eloquence of the Lady is enchanting;—the language flowing, harmonious, elegant, and almost ethereal. As Cowper said of his feelings when he first perused Milton, we, in reading these dialogues, "dance for joy."

But almost even more than this part, the contrasted descriptions given by the good Spirit and Comus, of their respective offices and occupations, by carrying us into a visionary world, have a surprising sort of poetical magic.

This was the undoubted forerunner of that sort of spiritual invention, which more than thirty years afterwards produced 'Paradise Lost' and 'Paradise Regained;' but with this characteristic and essential difference; that 'Comus' was written in youth, in joy and hope, and buoyancy, and playfulness; and those majestic and sublime epics, in the shadowed experience of age, in sorrow and disappointment,—

With darkness and with dangers compass'd round.

The latter therefore are bolder, deeper, grander, more heavenward, and more instructive: the smile-loving taste of blooming youth may, and will, for these reasons, relish 'Comus' most.

'Comus' is almost all description; a large portion of the epics is argumentative grandeur: the sentiments of the Mask have a platonic fancifulness; those of the epics have an awful, religious, and scriptural solemnity: the rebellion of angels, the fall of man, and the wily temptations of Satan in the wilderness, fill us with grave and sorrowful imaginations; but 'Comus' is all pleasure; and

the cool shadows of the leafy woods, the dewy morning, and the fragrant evening, and all the laughing scenery of rural nature,—the murmurs of the streams, and the enchanting songs of Echo,—the abodes of fairies, and sylvan deities,—convey nothing but cheerfulness and joy to the eyes or the heart. In the epics we enter into the realms of trial and suffering: there all is mightiness,—but mainly overshadowed by the darkness of crime, and regrets at the forfeiture of a state of heavenly and inexpressible enjoyment. When life grows sober from experience, and misfortunes, and wrongs, we take pleasure in these representations, because they are more congenial to the gloom of our own bosoms: we require stronger and deeper excitements; and we become more intellectual, and less fascinated by external beauty: we are no longer contented with mere description, but seek what will satisfy the reason, the soul, and the conscience: we examine the depths of learning, and the authorities which cannot deceive. But 'Comus' glitters like a bright landscape under the glowing beams of the morning sun, when they first disperse the vapours of night: the scenery is such as youthful bards dream in their slumbers on the banks of some haunted river: every thing of pastoral imagery is brought together with a profusion, a freshness, a distinctness, a picturesque radiance, which enchants like magic: every epithet is chosen with the most inimitable felicity, and is a picture in itself. Perhaps every word may be found in Shakspeare, Beaumont and Fletcher, Spenser, Jonson, Drayton, or other predecessors; but the array of all these words is nowhere else to be found in such close and happy combination. In all other poets these descriptions are patches;—there is no continued web. Thomson is beautiful in rural description, but he has not the distinctness and fairyism of

Milton. Add to this the magic inventiveness of the spiritual beings, by which all this landscape is inhabited and animated. The mind is thus kept in a sort of delicious dream.

This Mask has every quality of genuine poetry. Here is a beautiful fable of pure invention: here is character, sentiment, and rich and harmonious language. The author carries us out of the world of mere matter, and places us in an Elysium. Shakspeare shows an equal imagination in the 'Tempest;' but he has always coarsenesses intermixed: I am not sure that he ever continues two pages together of pure poetry: he sullies it by descending to colloquialities.

Milton is never guilty of the wanton and eccentric sports of imagination: he deals in what is consistent with our belief, and the rules of just taste: he never is guilty of extravagance or whim. Minor poets resort to this for the purpose of raising a false surprise. It is easy to invent, where no regard is had to truth or probability.

The songs of this poem are of a singular felicity: they are unbroken streams of exquisite imagery, either imaginative or descriptive, with a dance of numbers, which sounds like aerial music: for instance, the Lady's song to Echo:—

> Sweet Echo, sweetest nymph, that livest unseen
> Within thy aery shell,
> By slow Meander's margent green,
> And in the violet-embroider'd vale,
> Where the love-lorn nightingale
> Nightly to thee her sad song mourneth well!

The more we study this poem, the more pleasure we shall find in it: it illuminates and refines our fancy; and enables

us to discover in rural scenery new delights, and distinguish the features of each object with a clearness which our own sight would not have given us: it presents to us those associations which improve our intellect, and spiritualise the material joys of our senses. The effect of poetical language is to convey a sort of internal lustre, which puts the mind in a blaze: it is like bringing a bright lamp to a dark chamber.

But let it not be understood that I put this Mask upon a par with the epics, or the tragedy: these are of a still sublimer tone: their ingredients are still more extensive and more gigantic. The garden of Eden is vastly richer than woods and forests inhabited by dryads, wood-nymphs, and shepherds, and other sylvan crews, spiritual or embodied. Contemplate the intensity of power, which could delineate the creation of the world, the flight of Satan through Chaos, or our Saviour resisting Satan in the wilderness! To arrive at the highest rank of this divine art, requires a union of all its highest essences: there must be a creation, not only of beauty, but of majesty and profound sensibility, and great intellect and moral wisdom, and grace and grandeur of style, all blended. This the epics, and even the tragedy, have reached: but the Mask does not contain, nor did it require or admit this stupendous combination. It was intended as a sport of mental amusement and refined cheerfulness: no tragedy, nor tale coloured with the darker hues of man's contemplations, was designed. In the gay visions of youthful hope the stronger colours and forms of sublimity and pathos do not come forth: the court at Ludlow was met, not to weep, nor be awfully moved;—but to smile: they cried, with 'L'Allegro,'—

> Haste thee, nymph, and bring with thee
> Jest, and youthful jollity—

Quips, and cranks, and wanton wiles,
Nods, and becks, and wreathed smiles,
Such as hang on Hebe's cheek,
And love to live in dimple sleek:—
Sport, that wrinkled Care derides;
And Laughter, holding both her sides!

The poet had to accommodate himself to an audience of this character; yet so as not to shrink from the display of some of his own high gifts: and, O, with what inimitable brilliance and force he has performed his task! It is true that there is a mixture of grave philosophy in this poem:—but how calm it is!—how dressed with flowers!—how covered with graceful and brilliant imagery! Other feelings of a more sombre kind are awakened by the descriptions of the scenery of nature in the greater poems, except during the period before the serpent's entry into Eden.

There are hours and seasons, when, in the midst of the blackness of our woes, we can dally a little while with our melancholy, our regrets, and our anxieties;—when we are willing to delude ourselves by an escape into Elysian gardens;—to look upon nothing but the joys of the creation; and to see the scenery of forests, mountains, valleys, meadows, and rivers, in all their unshadowed delightfulness; where echo repeats no sounds but those of joyful music; and gay and untainted beauty walks the woods; and cheerfulness haunts the mountains and the glades; and labour lives in the fresh air in competence and content:—delusions, indeed, not a little excessive, but innocent and soothing delusions. Fallen man cannot so enjoy this breathing globe of inexhaustible riches and splendour: but poets may so present it to him: and the charms they thus supply to our fearful and dangerous existence, are medicines and gifts which deserve our deep gratitude; and will not let the memory of the givers be forgotten by posterity.

What gift of this kind has our nation had so full of charms and excellence as 'Comus?'—And here I close, when I recollect how many panegyrists of greater weight than my voice, this perfect composition has already had.

THE MASK.

THE PERSONS.

THE ATTENDANT SPIRIT, afterwards in the habit of THYRSIS.
COMUS, with his Crew.
THE LADY.
FIRST BROTHER.
SECOND BROTHER.
SABRINA, the Nymph.

The chief Persons, who presented, were

The Lord Brackley.
Mr. Thomas Egerton, his brother.
The Lady Alice Egerton.

COMUS.

The first Scene discovers a wild Wood.

The ATTENDANT SPIRIT *descends or enters.*

BEFORE the starry threshold of Jove's court
My mansion is, where those immortal shapes
Of bright aerial spirits live insphered[1]
In regions mild[2] of calm and serene air,
Above the smoke and stir of this dim spot,
Which men call earth; and, with low-thoughted care
Confined, and pester'd in this pinfold[3] here,
Strive to keep up a frail and feverish being,
Unmindful of the crown that virtue gives,
After this mortal change, to her true servants,
Amongst the enthroned gods[4] on sainted seats.
Yet some there be, that by due steps aspire
To lay their just hands on that golden key,

That opes the palace of Eternity :[5]
To such my errand is ; and, but for such,
I would not soil[6] these pure ambrosial weeds
With the rank vapours of this sin-worn mould.
But to my task. Neptune, besides the sway
Of every salt flood,[7] and each ebbing stream,
Took in by lot 'twixt high and nether Jove[8]
Imperial rule of all the sea-girt isles,
That, like to rich and various gems, inlay
The unadorned bosom of the deep :[9]
Which he, to grace his tributary gods,[10]
By course commits to several government,
And gives them leave to wear their sapphire crowns,
And wield their little tridents : but this isle,
The greatest and the best of all the main,
He quarters[11] to his blue-hair'd deities ;
And all this tract that fronts the falling sun
A noble peer of mickle trust and power
Has in his charge, with temper'd awe to guide
An old and haughty nation, proud in arms :[12]
Where his fair offspring,[13] nursed in princely lore,
Are coming to attend their father's state,
And new-entrusted sceptre : but their way
Lies through the perplex'd paths of this drear wood,
The nodding horrour of whose shady brows[14]
Threats the forlorn and wandering passenger ;
And here their tender age might suffer peril,
But that by quick command from sovran Jove
I was dispatch'd for their defence and guard :
And listen why ;[15] for I will tell you now

What never yet was heard in tale or song,[16]
From old or modern bard, in hall or bower.[17]
Bacchus, that first from out the purple grape[18]
Crush'd the sweet poison of misused wine,
After the Tuscan mariners transform'd,[19]
Coasting the Tyrrhene shore, as the winds listed,[20]
On Circe's island fell: (who knows not Circe,
The daughter of the Sun,[21] whose charmed cup
Whoever tasted, lost his upright shape,
And downward fell into a groveling swine?[22])
This nymph, that gazed upon his clustering locks[23]
With ivy berries wreathed, and his blithe youth,
Had by him, ere he parted thence, a son
Much like his father, but his mother more,
Whom therefore she brought up, and Comus named:[24]
Who, ripe and frolick of his full-grown age,
Roving the Celtick and Iberian fields,[25]
At last betakes him to this ominous wood;[26]
And, in thick shelter of black shades imbower'd,
Excels his mother at her mighty art,
Offering to every weary traveller
His orient liquor in a crystal glass,
To quench the drouth of Phœbus; which as they taste,
(For most do taste through fond intemperate thirst[27])
Soon as the potion works, their human countenance,
The express resemblance of the gods, is changed
Into some brutish form[28] of wolf, or bear;
Or ounce, or tiger, hog, or bearded goat,

All other parts remaining as they were;
And they, so perfect is their misery,
Not once perceive their foul disfigurement,[29]
But boast themselves[30] more comely than before;
And all their friends and native home forget,
To roll with pleasure in a sensual stye.[31]
Therefore, when any, favour'd of high Jove,
Chances to pass through this adventurous glade,[32]
Swift as the sparkle of a glancing star[33]
I shoot from heaven, to give him safe convoy,
As now I do: but first I must put off
These my sky-robes spun out of Iris' woof,[34]
And take the weeds and likeness of a swain[35]
That to the service of this house belongs,
Who with his soft pipe, and smooth-dittied song,
Well knows to still the wild winds when they roar,
And hush the waving woods;[36] nor of less faith,
And in this office of his mountain watch
Likeliest, and nearest to the present aid
Of this occasion. But I hear the tread
Of hateful steps; I must be viewless now.[37]

COMUS enters with a charming rod in one hand, his glass in the other; with him a rout of monsters, headed like sundry sorts of wild beasts, but otherwise like men and women, their apparel glistering: they come in making a riotous and unruly noise, with torches in their hands.

COM. The star, that bids the shepherd fold,[38]
Now the top of heaven doth hold;
And the gilded car of day
His glowing axle doth allay

In the steep Atlantick stream;
And the slope sun his upward beam
Shoots against the dusky pole,
Pacing toward the other goal
Of his chamber in the East.[39]
Meanwhile welcome joy, and feast,
Midnight shout, and revelry,
Tipsy dance, and jollity.
Braid your locks with rosy twine,
Dropping odours, dropping wine.
Rigour now is gone to bed,[40]
And Advice with scrupulous head:[41]
Strict Age, and sour Severity,[42]
With their grave saws,[43] in slumber lie.
We, that are of purer fire,
Imitate the starry quire,
Who, in their nightly watchful spheres,[44]
Lead in swift round the months and years.
The sounds and seas, with all their finny drove,
Now to the moon in wavering morrice move;[45]
And, on the tawny sands and shelves,
Trip the pert faeries and the dapper elves.[46]
By dimpled brook[47] and fountain-brim,[48]
The wood-nymphs, deck'd with daisies trim,
Their merry wakes and pastimes keep:
What hath night to do with sleep?
Night hath better sweets to prove;
Venus now wakes, and wakens Love.
Come, let us our rites begin;
'Tis only day-light that makes sin,[49]
Which these dun shades will ne'er report.—
Hail, goddess of nocturnal sport,

Dark-veil'd Cotytto![50] to whom the secret flame
Of midnight torches burns; mysterious dame,
That ne'er art call'd but when the dragon woom[51]
Of Stygian darkness spets her thickest gloom,
And makes one blot of all the air;
Stay thy cloudy ebon chair,
Wherein thou ridest with Hecate, and befriend
Us thy vow'd priests, till utmost end
Of all thy dues be done, and none left out;
Ere the babbling eastern scout,[52]
The nice morn,[53] on the Indian steep
From her cabin'd loop-hole peep,
And to the tell-tale sun descry
Our conceal'd solemnity.—
Come, knit hands, and beat the ground,
In a light fantastick round.[54]

THE MEASURE.

Break off, break off;[55] I feel the different pace
Of some chaste footing near about this ground.
Run to your shrouds,[56] within these brakes and trees;
Our number may affright: some virgin sure
(For so I can distinguish by mine art)
Benighted in these woods. Now to my charms,
And to my wily trains: I shall ere long
Be well-stock'd with as fair a herd as grazed
About my mother Circe. Thus I hurl
My dazzling spells[57] into the spungy air,
Of power to cheat the eye with blear illusion,[58]
And give it false presentments, lest the place
And my quaint habits breed[59] astonishment,

And put the damsel to suspicious flight;
Which must not be, for that's against my course:
I, under fair pretence of friendly ends,
And well-placed words of glozing[60] courtesy
Baited with reasons not unplausible,
Wind me into the easy-hearted man,
And hug him into snares. When once her eye
Hath met the virtue of this magick dust,[61]
I shall appear some harmless villager,[62]
Whom thrift keeps up about his country gear.
But here she comes: I fairly[63] step aside,
And hearken, if I may, her business here.

The LADY *enters.*

LAD. This way the noise was, if mine ear be true,
My best guide now: methought it was the sound
Of riot and ill-managed merriment,
Such as the jocund flute, or gamesome pipe,
Stirs up among the loose unletter'd hinds,
When for their teeming flocks and granges full,
In wanton dance they praise the bounteous Pan,
And thank the gods amiss. I should be loth
To meet the rudeness and swill'd insolence,
Of such late wassailers;[64] yet, O! where else
Shall I inform my unacquainted feet[65]
In the blind mazes of this tangled wood?[66]
My brothers, when they saw me wearied out
With this long way, resolving here to lodge
Under the spreading favour of these pines,[67]
Stepp'd, as they said, to the next thicket-side,
To bring me berries, or such cooling fruit

As the kind hospitable woods provide.[68]
They left me then, when the gray-hooded Even,
Like a sad votarist[69] in palmer's weed,[70]
Rose from the hindmost wheels of Phœbus' wain.
But where they are, and why they came not back,
Is now the labour of my thoughts; 'tis likeliest
They had engaged their wandering steps[71] too far;
And envious darkness, ere they could return,
Had stole them from me: else, O thievish Night,[72]
Why shouldst thou, but for some felonious end,
In thy dark lantern thus close up the stars,
That Nature hung in heaven, and fill'd their lamps
With everlasting oil, to give due light
To the misled and lonely traveller?
This is the place, as well as I may guess,
Whence even now the tumult of loud mirth
Was rife, and perfect in my listening ear;
Yet naught but single darkness do I find.
What might this be? A thousand fantasies
Begin to throng into my memory,[73]
Of calling shapes, and beckoning shadows dire,[74]
And aery tongues that syllable[75] men's names
On sands, and shores, and desert wildernesses.
These thoughts may startle well, but not astound
The virtuous mind, that ever walks attended
By a strong-siding champion, Conscience.—
O, welcome, pure-eyed Faith; white-handed Hope,
Thou hovering angel, girt with golden wings;[76]
And thou, unblemish'd form of Chastity![77]
I see ye visibly, and now believe

That He, the Supreme Good, to whom all things ill
Are but as slavish officers of vengeance,
Would send a glistering guardian, if need were,
To keep my life and honour unassail'd.
Was I deceived, or did a sable cloud[78]
Turn forth her silver lining on the night?
I did not err; there does a sable cloud
Turn forth her silver lining on the night,
And casts a gleam over this tufted grove:
I cannot halloo to my brothers,[79] but
Such noise as I can make to be heard farthest,
I 'll venture; for my new-enliven'd spirits
Prompt me; and they perhaps are not far off.

SONG.

Sweet Echo, sweetest nymph, that livest unseen[80]
Within thy aery shell,
By slow Meander's margent green,
And in the violet-embroider'd[81] vale,
Where the love-lorn[82] nightingale
Nightly to thee her sad song mourneth well;[83]
Canst thou not tell me of a gentle pair[84]
That likest thy Narcissus are?
O, if thou have
Hid them in some flowery cave,[85]
Tell me but where,[86]
Sweet queen of parly, daughter of the sphere![87]
So mayst thou be translated to the skies,
And give resounding grace to all Heaven's harmonies.[88]

Enter COMUS.

COM. Can any mortal mixture of earth's mould
Breathe such divine enchanting ravishment?[89]
Sure something holy lodges in that breast,
And with these raptures moves the vocal air
To testify his hidden residence.
How sweetly did they float upon the wings
Of silence, through the empty-vaulted night,
At every fall smoothing the raven-down
Of darkness, till it smiled! I have oft heard
My mother Circe with the sirens three,[90]
Amidst the flowery-kirtled Naiades,
Culling their potent herbs and baleful drugs;
Who, as they sung, would take the prison'd soul,
And lap it in Elysium:[91] Scylla wept,
And chid her barking waves into attention,
And fell Charybdis murmur'd soft applause:[92]
Yet they in pleasing slumber lull'd the sense,
And in sweet madness robb'd it of itself;[93]
But such a sacred and home-felt delight,
Such sober certainty of waking bliss,
I never heard till now.—I 'll speak to her,
And she shall be my queen.—Hail, foreign wonder![94]
Whom certain these rough shades did never breed,
Unless the goddess that in rural shrine
Dwell'st here with Pan, or Sylvan; by bless'd song
Forbidding every bleak unkindly fog
To touch the prosperous growth of this tall wood.[95]

LAD. Nay, gentle shepherd, ill is lost that praise,

That is address'd to unattending ears;
Not any boast of skill, but extreme shift
How to regain my sever'd company,
Compell'd me to awake the courteous Echo
To give me answer from her mossy couch.

COM. What chance, good Lady, hath bereft you thus?[96]

LAD. Dim darkness, and this leavie labyrinth.

COM. Could that divide you from near-ushering guides?

LAD. They left me weary on a grassy turf.

COM. By falsehood, or discourtesy, or why?

LAD. To seek in the valley some cool friendly spring.[97]

COM. And left your fair side all unguarded, Lady?

LAD. They were but twain, and purposed quick return.

COM. Perhaps forestalling[98] night prevented them.

LAD. How easy my misfortune is to hit!

COM. Imports their loss, beside the present need?

LAD. No less than if I should my brothers lose.

COM. Were they of manly prime, or youthful bloom?[99]

LAD. As smooth as Hebe's their unrazor'd lips.[100]

COM. Two such I saw, what time the labour'd ox
In his loose traces from the furrow came,[101]
And the swink'd hedger at his supper sat;[102]
I saw them under a green mantling vine,
That crawls along the side of yon small hill,

Plucking ripe clusters from the tender shoots:
Their port was more than human, as they stood:
I took it for a faery vision
Of some gay creatures of the element,[103]
That in the colours of the rainbow live,
And play in the plighted clouds.[104] I was awe-struck,
And, as I pass'd, I worshipp'd; if those you seek,
It were a journey like the path to heaven,
To help you find them.

LAD. Gentle villager,
What readiest way would bring me to that place?

COM. Due west it rises from this shrubby point.[105]

LAD. To find out that, good shepherd, I suppose,
In such a scant allowance of star-light,
Would overtask the best land-pilot's art,
Without the sure guess of well-practised feet.

COM. I know each lane, and every alley green,
Dingle, or bushy dell of this wild wood,
And every bosky bourn from side to side,[106]
My daily walks and ancient neighbourhood;
And if your stray attendance be yet lodged,
Or shroud within these limits, I shall know
Ere morrow wake, or the low-roosted lark
From her thatch'd pallet rouse; if otherwise,
I can conduct you, Lady, to a low
But loyal cottage, where you may be safe
Till farther quest.

LAD. Shepherd, I take thy word,
And trust thy honest offer'd courtesy,
Which oft is sooner found in lowly sheds

With smoky rafters, than in tapestry halls
And courts of princes, where it first was named,[107]
And yet is most pretended: in a place
Less warranted than this, or less secure,
I cannot be, that I should fear to change it.—
Eye me, bless'd Providence, and square my trial
To my proportion'd strength!—Shepherd, lead on. [*Exeunt.*

Enter the Two Brothers.

El. Br. Unmuffle,[108] ye faint stars; and thou, fair moon,
That wont'st to love the traveller's benison,[109]
Stoop thy pale visage through an amber cloud,[110]
And disinherit Chaos,[111] that reigns here
In double night of darkness and of shades;
Or, if your influence be quite damm'd up
With black usurping mists, some gentle taper,
Though a rush-candle from the wicker hole
Of some clay habitation, visit us[112]
With thy long-level'd rule of streaming light;[113]
And thou shalt be our star of Arcady,
Or Tyrian cynosure.[114]

Sec. Br. Or, if our eyes
Be barr'd that happiness, might we but hear
The folded flocks[115] penn'd in their wattled cotes,
Or sound of pastoral reed with oaten stops,
Or whistle from the lodge, or village cock
Count the night watches to his feathery dames,
'Twould be some solace yet, some little cheering,
In this close dungeon of innumerous[116] boughs.
But, O, that hapless virgin, our lost sister!

Where may she wander now, whither betake her
From the chill dew, among rude burs and thistles?
Perhaps some cold bank is her bolster now,
Or 'gainst the rugged bark of some broad elm
Leans her unpillow'd head, fraught with sad fears.
What, if in wild amazement and affright;
Or, while we speak, within the direful grasp
Of savage hunger, or of savage heat?

EL. BR. Peace, brother; be not over-exquisite[117]
To cast the fashion of uncertain evils:[118]
For grant they be so, while they rest unknown,[119]
What need a man forestall his date of grief,
And run to meet what he would most avoid?
Or if they be but false alarms of fear,
How bitter is such self-delusion!
I do not think my sister so to seek,
Or so unprincipled in Virtue's book,
And the sweet peace that goodness bosoms ever,
As that the single want of light and noise
(Not being in danger, as I trust she is not)[120]
Could stir the constant mood of her calm thoughts,
And put them into misbecoming plight.
Virtue could see to do what Virtue would
By her own radiant light,[121] though sun and moon
Were in the flat sea sunk; and Wisdom's self
Oft seeks to sweet retired solitude;[122]
Where, with her best nurse, Contemplation,[123]
She plumes her feathers,[124] and lets grow her wings,
That in the various bustle of resort
Were all-to ruffled,[125] and sometimes impair'd.
He, that has light within his own clear breast,
May sit in the centre, and enjoy bright day:[126]

But he, that hides a dark soul and foul thoughts,
Benighted walks under the mid-day sun;
Himself is his own dungeon.[127]
SEC. BR. 'Tis most true,
That musing Meditation most affects
The pensive secresy of desert cell,
Far from the cheerful haunt of men and herds,
And sits as safe as in a senate-house;[128]
For who would rob a hermit of his weeds,
His few books, or his beads, or maple dish,
Or do his gray hairs any violence?
But Beauty,[129] like the fair Hesperian tree
Laden with blooming gold, had need the guard
Of dragon-watch with unenchanted eye,[130]
To save her blossoms, and defend her fruit,
From the rash hand of bold Incontinence.
You may as well spread out the unsunn'd heaps
Of miser's treasure by an outlaw's den,
And tell me it is safe, as bid me hope
Danger will wink on opportunity,
And let a single helpless maiden pass[131]
Uninjured in this wild surrounding waste.
Of night, or loneliness, it recks me not;
I fear the dread events that dog them both,
Lest some ill-greeting touch attempt the person
Of our unowned sister.
EL. BR. I do not, brother,
Infer as if I thought my sister's state
Secure, without all doubt or controversy;
Yet, where an equal poise[132] of hope and fear
Does arbitrate the event, my nature is
That I incline to hope, rather than fear,

And gladly banish squint suspicion.[133]
My sister is not so defenceless left
As you imagine; she has a hidden strength,
Which you remember not.
SEC. BR. What hidden strength,
Unless the strength of Heaven, if you mean that?
EL. BR. I mean that too, but yet a hidden strength,
Which, if Heaven gave it, may be term'd her own:
'Tis Chastity, my brother, Chastity:
She, that has that, is clad in complete steel;
And, like a quiver'd nymph with arrows keen,[134]
May trace huge forests,[135] and unharbour'd heaths,
Infamous hills,[136] and sandy perilous wilds;
Where, through the sacred rays of Chastity,[137]
No savage fierce, bandite, or mountaineer,[138]
Will dare to soil her virgin purity:
Yea, there, where very desolation dwells,
By grots and caverns shagg'd with horrid shades,
She may pass on with unblench'd[139] majesty,
Be it not done in pride, or in presumption.
Some say, no evil thing that walks by night[140]
In fog or fire, by lake or moorish fen,[141]
Blue meagre hag, or stubborn unlaid ghost
That breaks his magick chains at curfeu time,[142]
No goblin, or swart faery of the mine,[143]
Hath hurtful power o'er true Virginity.
Do ye believe me yet, or shall I call
Antiquity from the old schools of Greece
To testify the arms of Chastity?
Hence[144] had the huntress Dian her dread bow,
Fair silver-shafted queen, for ever chaste,

Wherewith she tamed the brinded lioness
And spotted mountain-pard, but set at naught
The frivolous bolt of Cupid;[145] gods and men
Fear'd her stern frown, and she was queen of the woods.
What was that snaky-headed Gorgon shield,
That wise Minerva wore, unconquer'd virgin,
Wherewith she freezed her foes to congeal'd stone,
But rigid looks[146] of chaste austerity,
And noble grace that dash'd brute violence[147]
With sudden adoration and blank awe?
So dear to Heaven is saintly chastity,
That, when a soul is found sincerely so,
A thousand liveried angels lacky her,[148]
Driving far off each thing of sin and guilt;
And in clear dream and solemn vision,
Tell her of things that no gross ear can hear;[149]
Till oft converse with heavenly habitants
Begin to cast a beam on the outward shape,
The unpolluted temple of the mind,[150]
And turns it by degrees to the soul's essence,[151]
Till all be made immortal: but when lust,
By unchaste looks,[152] loose gestures, and foul talk,
But most by lewd and lavish act of sin,
Lets in defilement to the inward parts;
The soul grows clotted by contagion,[153]
Imbodies, and imbrutes,[154] till she quite lose
The divine property of her first being.
Such are those thick and gloomy shadows damp,
Oft seen in charnel vaults and sepulchres
Lingering, and sitting by a new-made grave,
As loth to leave the body that it loved,

And link'd itself by carnal sensuality
To a degenerate and degraded state.
SEC. BR. How charming is divine philosophy![155]
Not harsh and crabbed, as dull fools suppose;
But musical as is Apollo's lute,[156]
And a perpetual feast of nectar'd sweets,
Where no crude surfeit reigns.
EL. BR. List, list; I hear
Some far off halloo break the silent air.
SEC. BR. Methought so too; what should it be?
EL. BR. For certain
Either some one like us night-founder'd here,
Or else some neighbour woodman, or at worst,
Some roving robber calling to his fellows.
SEC. BR. Heaven keep my sister. Again, again, and near!
Best draw, and stand upon our guard.
EL. BR. I'll halloo:
If he be friendly, he comes well; if not,
Defence is a good cause, and Heaven be for us.

Enter the ATTENDANT SPIRIT, *habited like a Shepherd.*

That halloo I should know; what are you? speak;
Come not too near; you fall on iron stakes else.
SPIR. What voice is that? my young lord? speak again.
SEC. BR. O brother, 'tis my father's shepherd, sure.

El. Br. Thyrsis? whose artful strains[157] have
oft delay'd
The huddling brook to hear his madrigal,[158]
And sweeten'd every muskrose of the dale?
How camest thou here, good swain? hath any
ram
Slipp'd from the fold, or young kid lost his dam,
Or straggling wether the pent flock forsook?
How couldst thou find this dark sequester'd
nook?[159]

Spir. O my loved master's heir, and his next
joy,
I came not here on such a trivial toy
As a stray'd ewe, or to pursue the stealth
Of pilfering wolf: not all the fleecy wealth,
That doth enrich these downs, is worth a thought
To this my errand, and the care it brought.
But, O my virgin Lady, where is she?
How chance she is not in your company?

El. Br. To tell thee sadly,[160] shepherd, with-
out blame,
Or our neglect, we lost her as we came.

Spir. Ay me unhappy! then my fears are
true.

El. Br. What fears, good Thyrsis? Pr'ythee
briefly shew.

Spir. I'll tell ye; 'tis not vain or fabulous,
(Though so esteem'd by shallow ignorance)
What the sage poets, taught by the heavenly
Muse,
Storied of old, in high immortal verse,
Of dire chimeras, and enchanted isles,

And rifted rocks whose entrance leads to hell;[161]
For such there be; but unbelief is blind.
Within the navel[162] of this hideous wood,
Immured in cypress shades, a sorcerer dwells,
Of Bacchus and of Circe born, great Comus,
Deep skill'd in all his mother's witcheries;
And here to every thirsty wanderer
By sly enticement gives his baneful cup,
With many murmurs mix'd,[163] whose pleasing poison
The visage quite transforms of him that drinks,
And the inglorious likeness of a beast
Fixes instead,[164] unmoulding reason's mintage
Character'd in the face:[165] this have I learn'd,
Tending my flocks hard by in the hilly crofts,
That brow this bottom-glade; whence night by night
He and his monstrous rout are heard to howl,[166]
Like stabled wolves, or tigers at their prey,[167]
Doing abhorred rites to Hecate
In their obscured haunts of inmost bowers.
Yet have they many baits and guileful spells,
To inveigle and invite the unwary sense
Of them that pass unweeting by the way.
This evening late, by then the chewing flocks
Had ta'en their supper[168] on the savoury herb
Of knot-grass dew-besprent, and were in fold,
I sat me down to watch upon a bank
With ivy canopied, and interwove
With flaunting honey-suckle;[169] and began,
Wrapp'd in a pleasing fit of melancholy,
To meditate my rural minstrelsy,[170]

Till fancy had her fill; but, ere a close,[171]
The wonted roar was up amidst the woods,
And fill'd the air with barbarous dissonance;
At which I ceased, and listen'd them a while,
Till an unusual stop of sudden silence
Gave respite to the drowsy frighted steeds,[172]
That draw the litter of close-curtain'd sleep:[173]
At last a soft and solemn-breathing sound[174]
Rose like a steam of rich distill'd perfumes,
And stole upon the air, that even silence[175]
Was took ere she was ware, and wish'd she might
Deny her nature, and be never more,
Still to be so displaced. I was all ear,[176]
And took in strains that might create a soul
Under the ribs of death:[177] but, O! ere long,
Too well I did perceive it was the voice
Of my most honour'd Lady, your dear sister.
Amazed I stood, harrow'd with grief and fear,[178]
And, O poor hapless nightingale, thought I,
How sweet thou sing'st, how near the deadly snare!
Then down the lawns I ran with headlong haste,
Through paths and turnings often trod by day;
Till, guided by mine ear, I found the place,
Where that damn'd wisard, hid in sly disguise,
(For so by certain signs I knew) had met
Already, ere my best speed could prevent,
The aidless innocent Lady, his wish'd prey;
Who gently ask'd if he had seen such two,
Supposing him some neighbour villager.
Longer I durst not stay, but soon I guess'd
Ye were the two she meant; with that I sprung

Into swift flight, till I had found you here;
But farther know I not.
Sec. Br. O night, and shades!
How are ye join'd with hell in triple knot
Against the unarmed weakness of one virgin,
Alone and helpless! Is this the confidence
You gave me, brother?
El. Br. Yes, and keep it still;[179]
Lean on it safely; not a period
Shall be unsaid for me: against the threats
Of malice, or of sorcery, or that power
Which erring men call chance, this I hold firm;—
Virtue may be assail'd, but never hurt;
Surprised by unjust force, but not enthrall'd;
Yea, even that, which mischief meant most harm,
Shall in the happy trial prove most glory:
But evil on itself shall back recoil,
And mix no more with goodness; when at last,
Gather'd like scum, and settled to itself,
It shall be in eternal restless change
Self-fed and self-consumed:[180] if this fail,
The pillar'd firmament is rottenness,
And earth's base built on stubble.[181]—But come;
let's on.
Against the opposing will and arm of Heaven
May never this just sword be lifted up!
But for that damn'd magician, let him be girt
With all the grisly legions that troop
Under the sooty flag of Acheron,[182]
Harpies and hydras, or all the monstrous forms[183]
'Twixt Africa and Ind, I'll find him out,
And force him to return his purchase back,

Or drag him by the curls to a foul death,
Cursed as his life.
SPIR. Alas! good venturous youth,
I love thy courage yet, and bold emprise;
But here thy sword can do thee little stead;
Far other arms and other weapons must
Be those, that quell the might of hellish charms:[184]
He with his bare wand can unthread thy joints,
And crumble all thy sinews.[185]
EL. BR. Why, pr'ythee, shepherd,
How durst thou then thyself approach so near,
As to make this relation?
SPIR. Care, and utmost shifts,
How to secure the Lady from surprisal,
Brought to my mind a certain shepherd lad,
Of small regard to see to, yet well skill'd
In every virtuous plant, and healing herb,
That spreads her verdant leaf to the morning ray:
He loved me well, and oft would beg me sing;
Which when I did, he on the tender grass
Would sit, and hearken ev'n to ecstasy;
And in requital ope his leathern scrip,
And show me simples of a thousand names,
Telling their strange and vigorous faculties:
Amongst the rest a small unsightly root,
But of divine effect, he cull'd me out;
The leaf was darkish, and had prickles on it,
But in another country, as he said,
Bore a bright golden flower, but not in this soil:
Unknown, and like esteem'd,[186] and the dull swain
Treads on it daily with his clouted shoon:[187]
And yet more med'cinal is it than that moly,[188]

That Hermes once to wise Ulysses gave:
He call'd it hæmony, and gave it me,
And bade me keep it as of sovran use
'Gainst all enchantments, mildew blast, or damp,
Or ghastly furies' apparition.[189]
I pursed it up,[190] but little reckoning made,
Till now that this extremity compell'd:
But now I find it true; for by this means
I knew the foul enchanter though disguised,
Enter'd the very lime-twigs of his spells,
And yet came off: if you have this about you,[191]
(As I will give you when we go) you may
Boldly assault the necromancer's hall;
Where if he be, with dauntless hardihood,
And brandish'd blade, rush on him;[192] break his glass,
And shed the luscious liquour on the ground,[193]
But seize his wand; though he and his cursed crew[194]
Fierce sign of battle make, and menace high,
Or like the sons of Vulcan vomit smoke,[195]
Yet will they soon retire, if he but shrink.

EL. BR. Thyrsis, lead on apace; I'll follow thee;
And some good angel bear a shield before us![196]

The scene changes to a stately palace, set out with all manner of deliciousness: soft music: tables spread with all dainties. COMUS appears with his rabble, and the LADY set in an enchanted chair, to whom he offers his glass, which she puts by, and goes about to rise.

COM. Nay, Lady, sit; if I but wave this wand,

Your nerves are all chain'd up in alabaster,[197] 660
And you a statue, or, as Daphne was,[198]
Root-bound, that fled Apollo.
LAD. Fool, do not boast;
Thou canst not touch the freedom of my mind[199]
With all thy charms, although this corporal rind
Thou hast immanacled, while Heaven sees good.
COM. Why are you vex'd, Lady? Why do you
frown? 666
Here dwell no frowns, nor anger; from these gates
Sorrow flies far: see, here be all the pleasures,
That fancy can beget on youthful thoughts,[200]
When the fresh blood grows lively, and returns
Brisk as the April buds in primrose-season. 671
And first, behold this cordial julep here,
That flames and dances in his crystal bounds,
With spirits of balm and fragrant syrups mix'd:
Not that Nepenthes,[201] which the wife of Thone
In Egypt gave to Jove-born Helena, 676
Is of such power to stir up joy as this,
To life so friendly, or so cool to thirst.
Why should you be so cruel to yourself,
And to those dainty limbs, which nature lent[202]
For gentle usage and soft delicacy? 681
But you invert the covenants of her trust,
And harshly deal, like an ill borrower,
With that which you received on other terms;
Scorning the unexempt condition, 685
By which all mortal frailty must subsist,
Refreshment after toil, ease after pain,
That have been tired all day without repast,
And timely rest have wanted; but, fair virgin,

This will restore all soon.

LAD. 'Twill not, false traitor!
'Twill not restore the truth and honesty,
That thou hast banish'd from thy tongue with lies.
Was this the cottage, and the safe abode,
Thou toldst me of? What grim aspects are these,[203]
These ugly-headed monsters? Mercy guard me!
Hence with thy brew'd enchantments, foul deceiver![204]
Hast thou betray'd my credulous innocence
With visor'd falsehood and base forgery;
And wouldst thou seek again to trap me here
With lickerish baits, fit to ensnare a brute?
Were it a draught for Juno when she banquets,
I would not taste thy treasonous offer; none,
But such as are good men, can give good things;[205]
And that which is not good, is not delicious
To a well-govern'd and wise appetite.[206]

COM. O foolishness of men! that lend their ears
To those budge doctors of the stoick fur,[207]
And fetch their precepts from the cynick tub,
Praising the lean and sallow abstinence!
Wherefore did Nature pour her bounties forth
With such a full and unwithdrawing hand,
Covering the earth with odours, fruits, and flocks,
Thronging the seas with spawn innumerable,
But all to please and sate the curious taste?
And set to work millions of spinning worms,
That in their green shops weave the smooth-hair'd silk,
To deck her sons; and, that no corner might

Be vacant of her plenty, in her own loins
She hutch'd[208] the all-worshipp'd ore, and precious gems,
To store her children with: if all the world
Should in a pet of temperance feed on pulse,
Drink the clear stream, and nothing wear but frieze,
The All-giver would be unthank'd, would be unpraised,
Not half his riches known, and yet despised:
And we should serve him as a grudging master,
As a penurious niggard of his wealth;
And live like Nature's bastards, not her sons,[209]
Who would be quite surcharged with her own weight,
And strangled with her waste fertility;
The earth cumber'd, and the wing'd air dark'd with plumes,[210]
The herds[211] would over-multitude their lords,
The sea o'erfraught would swell,[212] and the unsought diamonds
Would so imblaze the forehead of the deep,
And so bestud with stars,[213] that they below
Would grow inured to light, and come at last
To gaze upon the sun with shameless brows.
List, Lady; be not coy, and be not cosen'd
With that same vaunted name, virginity.
Beauty is Nature's coin, must not be hoarded,
But must be current; and the good thereof
Consists in mutual and partaken bliss,
Unsavoury in the enjoyment of itself:
If you let slip time, like a neglected rose,

It withers on the stalk with languish'd head.[214]
Beauty is Nature's brag,[215] and must be shown
In courts, at feasts, and high solemnities,
Where most may wonder at the workmanship:
It is for homely features to keep home,[216]
They had their name thence; coarse complexions,
And cheeks of sorry grain, will serve to ply
The sampler, and to tease the huswife's wool.
What need a vermeil-tinctured lip for that,
Love-darting eyes,[217] or tresses like the morn?
There was another meaning in these gifts;
Think what, and be advised: you are but young yet.[218]

LAD. I had not thought to have unlock'd my lips
In this unhallow'd air, but that this juggler
Would think to charm my judgment, as mine eyes,
Obtruding false rules prank'd in reason's garb.
I hate when Vice can bolt her arguments,[219]
And Virtue has no tongue to check her pride.
Impostor! do not charge most innocent Nature,
As if she would her children should be riotous
With her abundance; she, good cateress,
Means her provision only to the good,
That live according to her sober laws,
And holy dictate of spare temperance:[220]
If every just man, that now pines with want,
Had but a moderate and beseeming share[221]
Of that which lewdly-pamper'd luxury
Now heaps upon some few with vast excess,
Nature's full blessings would be well dispensed

In unsuperfluous even proportion,
And she no whit encumber'd with her store;
And then the Giver would be better thank'd,
His praise due paid: for swinish gluttony
Ne'er looks to Heaven amidst his gorgeous feast,
But with besotted base ingratitude
Crams, and blasphemes his feeder. Shall I go on,
Or have I said enow? To him that dares
Arm his profane tongue with contemptuous words
Against the sun-clad power of chastity,
Fain would I something say;—yet to what end?
Thou hast nor ear, nor soul,[222] to apprehend
The sublime notion, and high mystery,[223]
That must be utter'd to unfold the sage
And serious doctrine of virginity;
And thou art worthy that thou shouldst not know
More happiness than this thy present lot.
Enjoy your dear wit, and gay rhetorick,[224]
That hath so well been taught her dazzling fence;[225]
Thou art not fit to hear thyself convinced:
Yet, should I try, the uncontrouled worth
Of this pure cause would kindle my rapt spirits
To such a flame of sacred vehemence,
That dumb things would be moved to sympathize,
And the brute earth would lend her nerves,[226] and shake,
Till all thy magick structures, rear'd so high,
Were shatter'd[227] into heaps o'er thy false head.

Com. She fables not; I feel that I do fear[228]
Her words set off by some superiour power;

And though not mortal,[229] yet a cold shuddering dew
Dips me all o'er, as when the wrath of Jove
Speaks thunder, and the chains of Erebus,
To some of Saturn's crew. I must dissemble,
And try her yet more strongly. Come, no more;
This is mere moral babble, and direct
Against the canon-laws of our foundation;[230]
I must not suffer this; yet 'tis but the lees[231]
And settlings of a melancholy blood:
But this will cure all straight; one sip of this
Will bathe the drooping spirits in delight,
Beyond the bliss of dreams. Be wise, and taste.

The BROTHERS rush in with swords drawn, wrest his glass out of his hand, and break it against the ground; his rout make sign of resistance, but are all driven in. The ATTENDANT SPIRIT comes in.

SPIR. What, have you let the false enchanter 'scape?
O, ye mistook; ye should have snatch'd his wand,[232]
And bound him fast: without his rod reversed,
And backward mutters of dissevering power,
We cannot free the Lady that sits here
In stony fetters fix'd, and motionless:
Yet stay; be not disturb'd; now I bethink me,
Some other means[233] I have which may be used,
Which once of Melibœus old I learn'd,
The soothest[234] shepherd that e'er piped on plains.[235]
There is a gentle nymph not far from hence,[236]

That with moist curb sways the smooth Severn stream,
Sabrina is her name, a virgin pure;
Whilom she was the daughter of Locrine,
That had the sceptre from his father Brute.
The guiltless damsel, flying the mad pursuit
Of her enraged stepdame Guendolen,
Commended her fair innocence to the flood,
That staid her flight with his cross-flowing course.
The water nymphs, that in the bottom play'd,
Held up their pearled wrists, and took her in,
Bearing her straight to aged Nereus' hall;
Who, piteous of her woes, rear'd her lank head,
And gave her to his daughters to imbathe [237]
In nectar'd lavers,[238] strew'd with asphodel;
And through the porch [239] and inlet of each sense
Dropp'd in ambrosial oils, till she revived,
And underwent a quick immortal change,[240]
Made goddess of the river: still she retains
Her maiden gentleness, and oft at eve
Visits the herds along the twilight meadows,[241]
Helping all urchin blasts,[242] and ill-luck signs
That the shrewd meddling elfe delights to make,
Which she with precious vial'd liquours heals:
For which the shepherds at their festivals
Carol her goodness loud in rustick lays,
And throw sweet garland wreaths into her stream [243]
Of pansies, pinks, and gaudy daffadils:
And, as the old swain said, she can unlock
The clasping charm, and thaw the numming spell,[244]

If she be right invoked in warbled song;
For maidenhood she loves, and will be swift
To aid a virgin, such as was herself,[245]
In hard-besetting need; this will I try,
And add the power of some adjuring verse.

SONG.

Sabrina fair,
Listen where thou art sitting
Under the glassy, cool, translucent wave,
In twisted braids of lilies[246] knitting
The loose train of thy amber-dropping hair:[247]
Listen for dear honour's sake,
Goddess of the silver lake;
Listen, and save!
Listen, and appear to us,
In name of great Oceanus;[248]
By the earth-shaking Neptune's mace,[249]
And Tethys' grave majestick pace;
By hoary Nereus' wrinkled look,
And the Carpathian wisard's hook;
By scaly Triton's winding shell,[250]
And old soothsaying Glaucus' spell;
By Leucothea's lovely hands,
And her son that rules the strands;
By Thetis' tinsel-slipper'd feet,[251]
And the songs of sirens sweet;[252]
By dead Parthenope's dear tomb,
And fair Ligea's golden comb,[253]
Wherewith she sits on diamond rocks,
Sleeking her soft alluring locks;
By all the nymphs that nightly dance
Upon thy streams with wily glance;

Rise, rise, and heave thy rosy head,
From thy coral-paven bed,
And bridle in thy headlong wave,
Till thou our summons answer'd have.
Listen, and save![254]

SABRINA rises, attended by Water Nymphs, and sings.

By the rushy-fringed bank,[255]
Where grows the willow, and the osier dank,[256]
My sliding chariot stays,
Thick set with agate,[257] and the azure sheen[258]
Of turkis blue, and emerald green,
That in the channel strays;
Whilst from off the waters fleet
Thus I set my printless feet[259]
O'er the cowslip's velvet head,[260]
That bends not as I tread:[261]
Gentle swain, at thy request,
I am here.
SPIR. Goddess dear,
We implore thy powerful hand
To undo the charmed band
Of true virgin here distress'd,
Through the force, and through the wile,
Of unbless'd enchanter vile.
SAB. Shepherd, 'tis my office best
To help ensnared chastity:
Brightest Lady, look on me.[262]
Thus I sprinkle on thy breast
Drops, that from my fountain pure
I have kept, of precious cure;[263]

Thrice upon thy finger's tip,[264]
Thrice upon thy rubied lip:[265]
Next this marble venom'd seat,
Smear'd with gums of glutinous heat,
I touch with chaste palms moist and cold:—
Now the spell hath lost his hold;[266]
And I must haste, ere morning hour,
To wait in Amphitrite's bower.[267]

SABRINA descends, and the LADY rises out of her seat.

SPIR. Virgin, daughter of Locrine,
Sprung of old Anchises' line,[268]
May thy brimmed waves for this
Their full tribute never miss[269]
From a thousand petty rills,
That tumble down the snowy hills:
Summer drouth, or singed air
Never scorch thy tresses fair,
Nor wet October's torrent flood
Thy molten crystal fill with mud;
May thy billows roll ashore
The beryl and the golden ore;[270]
May thy lofty head be crown'd[271]
With many a tower[272] and terrace round,
And here and there thy banks upon
With groves of myrrh and cinnamon![273]
Come, Lady, while Heaven lends us grace,
Let us fly this cursed place,
Lest the sorcerer us entice
With some other new device.
Not a waste or needless sound,
Till we come to holier ground;

I shall be your faithful guide
Through this gloomy covert wide;
And not many furlongs thence
Is your father's residence,
Where this night are met in state
Many a friend to gratulate
His wish'd presence; and beside
All the swains, that there abide,
With jigs and rural dance resort:
We shall catch them at their sport;
And our sudden coming there
Will double all their mirth and chere.
Come, let us haste; the stars grow high;
But night sits monarch yet in the mid sky.[274]

The scene changes, presenting Ludlow town and the President's castle: then come in Country Dancers; after them the ATTENDANT SPIRIT, with the Two BROTHERS, and the LADY.

SONG.

SPIR. Back, shepherds, back; enough your play,
Till next sun-shine holiday:
Here be, without duck or nod,[275]
Other trippings to be trod
Of lighter toes, and such court guise
As Mercury did first devise,
With the mincing Dryades,
On the lawns, and on the leas.

This second Song presents them to their Father and Mother.

Noble Lord, and Lady bright,
I have brought ye new delight;

Here behold so goodly grown
Three fair branches of your own:
Heaven hath timely tried their youth,
Their faith, their patience, and their truth;
And sent them here through hard assays
With a crown of deathless praise,
To triumph in victorious dance
O'er sensual folly and intemperance.

The Dances ended, the SPIRIT epiloguizes.

SPIR. To the ocean now I fly,[276]
And those happy climes that lie
Where day never shuts his eye,
Up in the broad fields of the sky:[277]
There I suck the liquid air[278]
All amidst the gardens fair
Of Hesperus, and his daughters three[279]
That sing about the golden tree:[280]
Along the crisped shades and bowers
Revels the spruce and jocund Spring;
The Graces, and the rosy-bosom'd Hours,
Thither all their bounties bring;
There eternal Summer dwells,
And west winds, with musky wing,
About the cedar'd alleys fling
Nard and cassia's balmy smells.
Iris there with humid bow
Waters the odorous banks, that blow[281]
Flowers of more mingled hew
Than her purfled scarf can shew;
And drenches with Elysian dew[282]
(List, mortals, if your ears be true)[283]

BOMBAY BRANCH

Beds of hyacinth and roses,
Where young Adonis oft reposes,
Waxing well of his deep wound
In slumber soft, and on the ground [284]
Sadly sits the Assyrian queen : [285]
But far above in spangled sheen [286]
Celestial Cupid, her famed son, advanced,
Holds his dear Psyche sweet entranced,
After her wandering labours long,
Till free consent the gods among
Make her his eternal bride,
And from her fair unspotted side
Two blissful twins are to be born,
Youth and Joy ; [287] so Jove hath sworn.
But now my task is smoothly done, [288]
I can fly, or I can run,
Quickly to the green earth's end, [289]
Where the bow'd welkin slow doth bend ; [290]
And from thence can soar as soon
To the corners of the moon. [291]
Mortals, that would follow me,
Love Virtue ; she alone is free :
She can teach ye how to clime [292]
Higher than the sphery chime ; [293]
Or, if Virtue feeble were,
Heaven itself would stoop to her. [294]

NOTES ON COMUS.

[1] Verse 3. *Of bright aerial spirits live insphered.* In 'Il Penseroso,' the spirit of Plato was to be unsphered, v. 88. that is, to be called down from the sphere to which it had been allotted, where it had been insphered: thus also light is "sphered in a radiant cloud," 'Paradise Lost,' b. vii. 247.—T. Warton.

[2] Ver. 4. *In regions mild,* &c. Alluding probably to Homer's happy seat of the gods, 'Odyss.' vi. 42.—Newton.

[3] Ver. 7. *Pinfold.* "Pinfold" is now provincial, and signifies sometimes a sheepfold, but most commonly a pound.—T. Warton.

[4] Ver. 11. *Amongst the enthroned gods.* We may read with Fenton, "the enthroned;" or rather,

Amongst the gods enthroned on sainted seats.

But Shakspeare seems to ascertain the old collocation, 'Antony and Cleopatra,' a. i. s. 3:—

Though you in swearing shake the throned gods.

Milton, however, when speaking of the inhabitants of hea-

ven, exclusively of any allusion to the class of angels styled *throni*, seems to have annexed an idea of a dignity peculiar, and his own, to the word "enthroned." See 'Paradise Lost,' b. v. 536.—T. WARTON.

[5] Ver. 14. *That opes the palace of Eternity.* So Pope, with a little alteration, in one of his Satires, speaking of Virtue,

> Her priestess Muse forbids the good to die,
> And opes the temple of Eternity. NEWTON.

[6] Ver. 16. *I would not soil*, &c. But, in the 'Paradise Lost,' an angel eats with Adam, b. v. 433: this, however, was before the fall of our first parent: and as the angel Gabriel condescends to feast with Adam, while yet unpolluted, and in his primeval state of innocence; so our guardian spirit would not have soiled the purity of his ambrosial robes with the noisome exhalations of this sin-corrupted earth, but to assist those distinguished mortals, who, by a due progress in virtue, aspire to reach the golden key, which opens the palace of Eternity.—T. WARTON.

[7] Ver. 19. *Of every salt flood.* As in Lord Surrey's 'Songs and Sonnets,' &c. edit. 1587:—

> And in grene waues when the salt floode
> Doth ryse by rage of wynde. TODD.

[8] Ver. 20. *'Twixt high and nether Jove.* So, in Sylvester's 'Du Bart.' 1621, p. 1003:—

> Both upper Jove's and nether's diverse thrones.
> DUNSTER.

[9] Ver. 22. *That, like to rich and various gems, inlay*
The unadorned bosom of the deep.

The thought, as has been observed, is first in Shakspeare, of England, 'Richard II.' a. ii. s. 1. "This precious stone set in the silver sea." But Milton has height-

ened the comparison, omitting Shakspeare's petty conceit of the silver sea, the conception of a jeweller, and substituting another and a more striking piece of imagery.—T. WARTON.

[10] Ver. 24. *Tributary gods.* Hence perhaps Pope, in a similar vein of allegory, took his "tributary urns," 'Windsor Forest,' v. 436.—T. WARTON.

[11] Ver. 29. *He quarters.* That is, Neptune; with which name he honours the king, as sovereign of the four seas; for from the British Neptune only this noble peer derives his authority.—WARBURTON.

[12] Ver. 32. *With temper'd awe to guide*
An old and haughty nation, proud in arms.
That is, the Cambro-Britons, who were to be governed by respect mixed with awe.—T. WARTON.

[13] Ver. 34. *Where his fair offspring,* &c. In 'Arcades,' v. 27. an allusion is made to the honourable birth of the maskers. Probably an allusion might have been here intended, as well to the personal beauty, as to the princely descent of the young actors from Henry VII.—TODD.

[14] Ver. 38. *The nodding horrour of whose shady brows,* &c. Compare Tasso's enchanted forest, 'Gier. Lib.' c. xiii. st. 2; and Petrarch's Sonnet, composed as he passed through the forest of Ardennes, in his way to Avignon.—TODD.

[15] Ver. 43. *And listen why,* &c. Horace, 'Od.' III. i. 2:—

Favete linguis: carmina non prius
Audita—
Virginibus puerisque canto. RICHARDSON.

[16] Ver. 44. *What never yet was heard in tale or song.*

The poet insinuates that the story or fable of his Mask was new and unborrowed, although distantly founded on ancient poetical history. The allusion is, to the ancient mode of entertaining a splendid assembly, by singing or reciting tales.—T. WARTON.

[17] Ver. 45. *In hall or bower.* That is, literally, in hall or chamber. The two words are often thus joined in the old metrical romances.—T. WARTON.

[18] Ver. 46.

Bacchus, that first from out the purple grape, &c.

Though Milton builds his fable on classic mythology, yet his materials of magic have more the air of enchantments in the Gothic romances.—WARBURTON.

[19] Ver. 48. *After the Tuscan mariners transform'd.* This story is alluded to in Homer's fine 'Hymn to Bacchus;' the punishments he inflicted on the Tyrrhene pirates, by transforming them into various animals, are the subjects of that beautiful frieze on the lantern of Demosthenes, so accurately and elegantly described by Mr. Stuart, in his 'Antiquities of Athens,' vol. i. p. 33.—Jos. WARTON.

[20] Ver. 49. *Winds listed.* So, in St. John, iii. 8. "The wind bloweth where it listeth."—T. WARTON.

[21] Ver. 51. *The daughter of the Sun,* &c. Mr. Bowle observes that Milton here undoubtedly alluded to Boethius, l. iv. But see Virgil, 'Æn.' vii. 11. 17. Alcina has an enchanted cup in Ariosto, c. x. 45.—T. WARTON.

[22] Ver. 53. *And downward fell into a groveling swine.* Here Milton might have been influenced by G. Fletcher's description of the bower of vain delight, to which our Lord

is conducted by Satan. See 'Christ's Victorie,' st. 49.—HEADLEY.

[23] Ver. 54.

This nymph, that gazed upon his clustering locks.

This image of hair hanging in clusters, or curls, like a bunch of grapes, Milton afterwards adopted into the 'Par. Lost,' b. iv. 303. Compare also 'Sams. Agon.' v. 569.—T. WARTON.

[24] Ver. 58. *And Comus named.* Dr. Newton observes, that Comus is a deity of Milton's own making: but it should be remembered, that Comus is distinctly and most sublimely personified in the 'Agamemnon' of Æschylus, v. 1195. where, says Cassandra, enumerating in her vaticinal ravings the horrors that haunted her house, "That horrid band, who sing of evil things, will never forsake this house. Behold, Comus, the drinker of human blood, and fired with new rage, still remains within the house, being sent forward in an unlucky hour by the Furies his kindred, who chant a hymn recording the original crime of this fated family," &c.

Peck supposes Milton's Comus to be Chemos, "the obscene dread of Moab's sons," 'Par. Lost,' b. i. 406: but, with a sufficient propriety of allegory, he is professedly made the son of Bacchus and of Homer's sorceress Circe. Besides, our author, in his early poetry, and he was only twenty-six years old, is generally more classical and less scriptural than in pieces written after he had been deeply tinctured with the Bible. It must not, in the mean time, here be omitted, that Comus, the god of cheer, had been before a dramatic personage in one of Jonson's Masks before the court, 1619. An immense cup is carried before him, and he is crowned with roses and other flowers, &c. vol. vi. 29. His attendants carry javelins wreathed with ivy: he enters, riding in triumph from a grove of ivy, to the

wild music of flutes, tabors, and cymbals. At length, the grove of ivy is destroyed, p. 35.

> And the voluptuous Comus, god of cheer,
> Beat from his grove, and that defaced, &c.

See also Jonson's 'Forest,' b. i. 3:—

> Comus puts in for new delights, &c. T. WARTON.

Mr. Hole, in his 'Remarks on the Arabian Nights' Entertainments,' observes that Mr. Warton's quotation from the 'Agamemnon' of Æschylus does not agree with the character of Milton's Comus; and that the Comus of Ben Jonson is not the prototype of Milton's, as in Jonson's mask he is represented not as a gay seducing voluptuary, but merely as the god of good cheer, *Epicuri porcus*. Yet Jonson's mask perhaps afforded some hints to Milton. Comus had also appeared in English literature, as a mere belly-god, before Jonson's introduction of him. See Decker's 'Gvls Horne-booke,' bl. l. 1609, p. 4.—TODD.

[25] Ver. 60. *The Celtick and Iberian fields.* France and Spain.—THYER.

[26] Ver. 61. *Ominous wood.* 'Ominous,' is dangerous, inauspicious, full of portents, prodigies, wonders, monstrous appearances, misfortunes; synonymous words for omens. See 'Par. Reg.' b. iv. 481:—"This ominous night," &c.—T. WARTON.

[27] Ver. 67.

For most do taste through fond intemperate thirst.

Thus Ulysses, taking the charmed cup from Circe, Ovid, 'Met.' xiv. 276:—

> Accipimus sacra data pocula dextra,
> Quæ simul arenti sitientes hausimus ore.
>
> T. WARTON.

[28] Ver. 70. *Into some brutish form.* So Harrington, of Alcina's enchantments, 'Orl. Fur.' b. vi. st. 52.—TODD.

[29] Ver. 73. *And they, so perfect is their misery,*
Not once perceive their foul disfigurement.

Compare Spenser, 'Faer. Qu.' II. i. 54. of Sir Mordant, where his lady relates to Sir Guyon his wretched captivity in the bower of Bliss, under the enchantress Acrasia, whose "charmed cup," st. 55, finally destroys him; and by whom, says the lady, he had before been

> In chaines of lust and lewde desires ybound,
> And so transformed from his former skill,
> That me he knew not, neither his owne ill.

TODD.

[30] Ver. 75. *But boast themselves,* &c. He certainly alludes to that fine satire, in a dialogue of Plutarch, where some of Ulysses's companions, disgusted with the vices and vanities of human life, refuse to be restored by Circe into the shape of men.—JOS. WARTON.

Or, perhaps, to J. Baptista Gelli's Italian Dialogues, called 'Circe,' formed on Plutarch's plan.—T. WARTON.

Dr. Newton observes, that there is a remarkable difference in the transformations wrought by Circe, and those by her son Comus: in Homer, the persons are entirely changed, their mind alone remaining as it was before, 'Odyss.' x. 239: but here, only their head or countenance is changed, and for a very good reason; because they were to appear upon the stage, which they might do in masks: in Homer too, they are sorry for the exchange, v. 241; but here, the allegory is finely improved, and they have no notion of their disfigurement. This improvement upon Homer might still be copied from Homer, who ascribes much the same effect to the herb Lotos, 'Odyss.' ix. 94, which, whoever tasted, "forgot his friends and native home." After all, Milton perhaps remembered Plato, where he alludes to the

intoxicating power of the herb, and to the wretched situation of the Lotophagi, in that striking description of profligate youths, who, immersed in pleasure, not only refuse to hear the advice of friends, "but boast themselves more comely than before." De Repub. lib. viii.—TODD.

[31] Ver. 77. *To roll with pleasure in a sensual stye.* Milton applies the same fable, in the same language, to Tiberius, 'Par. Reg.' b. iv. 100.

> ——Expel this monster from his throne,
> Now made a stye. T. WARTON.

[32] Ver. 78.

> *Therefore, when any, favour'd of high Jove,*
> *Chances to pass through this adventurous glade.*

The Spirit in 'Comus' is the Satyr in Fletcher's 'Faithful Shepherdess.' He is sent by Pan to guide shepherds passing through a forest by moonlight, and to protect innocence in distress, a. iii. s. 1.—T. WARTON.

[33] Ver. 80. *Swift as the sparkle of a glancing star.* There are few finer comparisons that lie in so small a compass. Milton has repeated the thought in 'Par. Lost,' b. iv. 555.

> Thither came Uriel, gliding through the even
> On a sunbeam, swift as a shooting star
> In autumn thwarts the night, when vapours fired
> Impress the air, &c.

Compare 'Par. Reg.' b. iv. 619.—T. WARTON.

[34] Ver. 83. *Spun out of Iris' woof.* So our author of the archangel's military robe, 'Par. Lost,' b. xi. 244. "Iris had dipp'd the woof." Milton has frequent allusions to the colours of the rainbow. Truth and Justice are not only orbed in a rainbow, but are appareled in its colours, 'Ode on Nativ.' st. xv.—T. WARTON.

[35] Ver. 84.

And take the weeds and likeness of a swain, &c. Henry Lawes, the musician, who acted the part of the Spirit.—TODD.

[36] Ver. 87.

Well knows to still the wild winds when they roar,
And hush the waving woods.

Lawes himself, no bad poet, in 'A Pastorall Elegie to the memorie of his brother William,' applies the same compliment to his brother's musical skill:—

Weep, shepherd swaines!
For him that was the glorie of your plaines.
He could allay the murmurs of the wind;
He could appease
The sullen seas,
And calme the fury of the mind.

[37] Ver. 92. *I must be viewless now.* The epithet "viewless" occurs in the 'Ode on the Passion,' st. viii. and in 'Par. Lost,' b. iii. 518. Shakspeare has "the viewless "winds." Mr. Bowle observes, that the Spirit's conduct here much resembles that of Oberon in the 'Midsum. Night's Dream:'—

But who comes here? I am invisible,
And I will overhear their conference. T. WARTON.

[38] Ver. 93. *The star, that bids the shepherd fold.* Collins, in his beautiful 'Ode to Evening,' introduces this pastoral notation of time, accompanied with the most romantic and delightful imagery:—

——When thy folding-star arising shows
His paly circlet, at his warning lamp
The fragrant Hours and Elves,
Who slept in buds the day;
And many a nymph, who wreathes her brows with sedge,
And sheds the freshening dew, and, lovelier still,
The pensive Pleasures sweet,
Prepare thy shadowy car. TODD.

[39] Ver. 100. *Pacing toward the other goal*
Of his chamber in the East.

In allusion to the same metaphors employed by the Psalmist, Ps. xix. 5. "The sun as a bridegroom cometh out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race."—NEWTON.

[40] Ver. 107. *Rigour now is gone to bed.* Much in the strain of Sidney, 'Englands Helicon,' p. 1. edit. 1600.

Night hath closed all in her cloake;
Twinkling stars loue-thoughts prouoke;
Daunger hence good care doth keepe;
Iealousie itself doth sleepe. T. WARTON.

[41] Ver. 108. *And Advice with scrupulous head.* The manuscript reading, "And quick Law," is the best. It is not the essential attribute of advice to be scrupulous; but it is of quick law, or watchful law, to be so.—WARBURTON.

It was, however, in character for Comus to call "advice scrupulous." It was his business to depreciate, or ridicule, advice, at the expense of truth and propriety.—T. WARTON.

[42] Ver. 109. *Severity.* There is an earlier use of this word in the same signification. See Daniel's 'Compl. Rosam.' st. 39. ed. 1601. fol.

Titles that cold seueritie hath found. T. WARTON.

[43] Ver. 110. *Saws.* "Saws," sayings, maxims. Shakspeare, 'As you like it,' a. ii. s. 7.

Full of wise saws. NEWTON.

[44] Ver. 113. *Watchful spheres.* So, in the 'Ode Nativ.' v. 21. "And all the spangled host keep watch in order bright." See also 'Vac. Exercise,' v. 40. "The spheres of watchful fire." Compare Baruch, iii. 34. "The stars shined in their watches." And Ecclus. xliii. 10.—TODD.

[45] Ver. 116. *In wavering morrice move.* The morrice, or Moorish dance, was first brought into England, as I take it, in Edward III.'s time, when John of Gaunt returned from Spain, where he had been to assist his father-in-law, Peter king of Castile, against Henry the bastard.—PECK.

[46] Ver. 117.

And, on the tawny sands and shelves,
Trip the pert faeries and the dapper elves.

Fairies and elves are common to our national poetry: they also figure in tradition; and among the pastoral inhabitants of the lonesome hills and dales the belief in them is still strong. How they were imported, and from what land, has been and perhaps will continue a matter of conjecture: no one has had the boldness to believe that they are of British growth, though there are people still living who imagine they have seen them, and heard the sound of their elfin minstrelsy. The fairies, according to popular testimony, are an elegant and accomplished race: they dwell in palaces under secluded hills; they frequent, when the summer moon is up, the lonely stream banks; they spread tables sometimes in desert places, and astonish and refresh the benighted and hungry traveller with spiced cakes and perfumed wine; nor do they hesitate to mount their steeds—an elfin race; and, accompanied by music from invisible instruments, ride through the lonely villages at midnight, less to the alarm than the delight of the inhabitants. The last time they were seen in the south of Scotland was some five and forty years ago:—"When I was a boy of fifteen," said my informant, "I saw on a summer eve, just after sunset, what seemed a long line of little children running down the summit of a decayed turf fence, which bound as with a vertical belt a hill about half a mile distant: they were very little; they seemed clothed, but bareheaded; and, what was odd, they seemed

to sink into the hill when they reached a gap in the ridge down which they were running. There were hundreds of them, but one was twice as tall as the rest: we saw him thrice disappear on our side of the hill and thrice appear at the top again, as if he had passed through below the solid hill. I said we, because though I saw the 'pert fairies and the dapper elves' first, all the inhabitants of the village, some fifteen or so, saw them also." This is the latest account on record of the fairy-folk.—C.

[47] Ver. 119. *By dimpled brook.* Shenstone has adopted this picturesque expression, 'Ode on Rural Elegance:'—

> Forego a court's alluring pale
> For dimpled brook and leafy grove. TODD.

[48] Ver. 119. *Fountain-brim.* This was the pastoral language of Milton's age. So Drayton, 'Bar. W.' vi. 36:—

> Sporting with Hebe by a fountaine brim. TODD.

[49] Ver. 126. *'Tis only day-light that makes sin.* Mr. Bowle supposes that Milton had his eye on these gallant lyrics of a song in Jonson's 'Fox,' a. iii. s. 7:—

> 'Tis no sinne love's fruit to steale,
> But the sweet thefts to reveale:
> To be taken, to be seene,
> These have crimes accounted beene.—T. WARTON.

[50] Ver. 129. *Dark-veil'd Cotytto.* The goddess of wantonness.—TODD.

[51] Ver. 131. *The dragon woom.* Popular belief in some districts bestows on British witches the power of turning light into darkness, given by Milton and others to "dark-veil'd Cotytto." In one of the vales of the north dwelt in other days three witches; the first could milk the

cows at the same moment for ten miles around her; the second could turn her slipper into a sea-worthy ship, and make a voyage to Lapland; while the third had an enchanted distaff, which not only, when she twirled it round, against the course of nature,—

Made one blot of all the air;

but whatever she wished for when the cloud descended, she found at her command when it passed away and light returned. A dame so gifted could not fail to live in ease and comfort; and yet, if tradition is not in error, her life was aught but easy and gladsome: her house was mean; her dress was sordid; her meals were scanty; and whenever she moved abroad, she was pursued by the hue and cry of an evil reputation. Of her tricks and her transformations,—how she could turn a fox into a brown colt, and ride it over hill and dale,—how she could become a hare, and set patent shot and the swiftest hounds at defiance, together with many matters more marvellous still,—are they not recorded in that large and unfinished volume of traditionary belief which belongs to the northern peasantry?—C.

[52] Ver. 138. *Ere the blabbing eastern scout.* Shakspeare, 'K. Hen. VI.' P. ii. a. iv. s. 1:—

The gaudy, blabbing, and remorseful day. TODD.

[53] Ver. 139. *Nice.* A finely-chosen epithet, expressing at once curious and squeamish.—HURD.

[54] Ver. 143. *Come, knit hands, and beat the ground,*
In a light fantastick round.

Compare Fletcher's 'Faith. Shep.' a. i. s. 1:—

Arm in arm
Tread we softly in a round:
While the hollow neighbouring ground, &c.
T. WARTON.

[55] Ver. 145. *Break off.* A dance is here begun, called the measure; which the magician almost as soon breaks off, on perceiving the approach of "some chaste footing," from a sagacity appropriated to his character.—T. Warton.

A measure is said to have been a court dance of a stately turn; but sometimes to have expressed dances in general. A round is thus defined in Barret's 'Alvearie,' 1580. "When men daunce and sing, taking hands round." But the most curious and lively description of the measure and the round, is given in a series of fifteen lines, in Browne's 'Britannia's Pastorals,' b. i. s. 3.—Todd.

[56] Ver. 147. *Shrouds.* To your recesses, harbours, hiding-places, &c. So, in the 'Hymn Nativ.' v. 218. "Naught but profoundest hell can be his shroud." And see 'Par. Lost,' b. x. 1068. We have the verb, 'Par. Reg.' b. iv. 419. and below in 'Comus,' v. 316. where the last line is written in the manuscript, "Within these shroudie limits." Whence we are led to suspect, that our author, in some of these intances, has an equivocal reference to shrouds in the sense of the branches of a tree, now often used.—T. Warton.

[57] Ver. 154. *My dazzling spells.* See Fletcher, 'Faith. Shep.' a. iii. s. 1.

Adam says, that in his conversation with the angel, his earthly nature was overpowered by the heavenly, and, as with an object that excels the sense, "dazzled and spent."—'Par. Lost,' b. viii. 457.—T. Warton.

[58] Ver. 155. *To cheat the eye with blear illusion.* In our author's 'Reformation,' &c. "If our understanding have a film of ignorance over it, or be blear with gazing on other false glisterings," &c. 'Pr. W.' i. 12. But "blear-eyed" is a common and well-known phrase.—T. Warton.

[59] Ver. 157. *And my quaint habits breed,* &c. That is,

my strange habits, as Mr. Warton has observed; in which sense, "quaint" is often used by Spenser. But Milton here illustrates himself in the Preface to his 'Hist. of Moscovia:' "Long stories of absurd superstitions, ceremonies, quaint habits," &c.—Todd.

[60] Ver. 161. *Glozing.* Flattering, deceitful. As in 'Par. Lost,' b. iii. 93. "Glozing lies." Perhaps from Spenser, 'Faer. Qu.' iii. viii. 14. "Could well his glozing speeches frame."—T. Warton.

[61] Ver. 164. *When once her eye*
Hath met the virtue of this magick dust.

This refers to a previous line, "my powder'd spells," v. 154. But "powder'd" was afterwards altered into the present reading "dazzling." When a poet corrects, he is apt to forget and destroy his original train of thought.—T. Warton.

[62] Ver. 166. *Some harmless villager.* So Satan appeared to our Saviour in the 'Paradise Regained.'

[63] Ver. 168. *Fairly.* That is, softly.—Hurd.

[64] Ver. 178. *To meet the rudeness, and swill'd insolence,*
Of such late wassailers.

In some parts of England, especially in the west, it is still customary for a company of mummers, in the evening of the Christmas holydays, to go about carousing from house to house, who are called the wassailers. In Macbeth. "Wine and wassel," mean, in general terms, feasting and drunkenness, a. i. s. 7.—T. Warton.

[65] Ver. 180. *Shall I inform my unacquainted feet.* In the 'Faithful Shepherdess,' Amoret wanders through a wild wood in the night, but under different circumstances, yet

not without some apprehensions of danger. We have a parallel expression in 'Sams. Agon.' v. 335:—

hither hath inform'd
Your younger feet. T. WARTON.

[66] Ver. 181. *Tangled wood?* "They seek the dark, the bushy, the tangled forest," Prose W. vol. i. p. 13. And see 'Par. Lost,' b. iv. 176.—T. WARTON.

[67] Ver. 184. *Under the spreading favour of these pines.* This is like Virgil's "Hospitiis teneat frondentibus arbos," Georg. iv. 24. An inversion of the same sort occurs in Cicero, in a Latin version from Sophocles's 'Trachiniæ,' of the shirt of Nessus. 'Tusc. Disp.' ii. 8.—"Ipse inligatus peste interimor textili."—T. WARTON.

[68] Ver. 186. *To bring me berries, or such cooling fruit*
As the kind hospitable woods provide.

So Fletcher, 'Faith. Shep.' a. i. s. 1. where, says the virgin-shepherdess Clorin—

My meat shall be what these wild woods afford,
Berries, and chesnuts, &c.

By laying the scene of his Mask in a wild forest, Milton secured to himself a perpetual fund of picturesque description, which, resulting from situation, was always at hand. He was not obliged to go out of his way for this striking embellishment: it was suggested of necessity by present circumstances.—T. WARTON.

[69] Ver. 188. *When the gray-hooded Even,*
Like a sad votarist, &c.

Milton, notwithstanding his abhorrence of every thing that related to superstition, often dresses his imaginary beings in the habits of popery: but poetry is of all religions; and popery is a very poetical one. A votarist is one

who had made a religious vow, here perhaps for a pilgrimage, being in "palmer's weeds."—T. WARTON.

[70] Ver. 189. *Palmer's weed.* Spenser, 'Faer. Qu.' ii. i. 52. "I wrapt myself in palmer's weed."—NEWTON.

[71] Ver. 193. *Their wandering steps.* So, in those beautiful and impressive lines, which close the 'Paradise Lost:'—

> They hand in hand, with wandering steps and slow,
> Through Eden took their solitary way. TODD.

[72] Ver. 195. *O thievish Night.* Ph. Fletcher's 'Pisc. Ecl.' p. 34. edit. 1633:—

> the thievish Night
> Steals on the world, and robs our eyes of light.

In the present age, in which almost every common writer avoids palpable absurdities, at least monstrous and unnatural conceits, would Milton have introduced this passage, where thievish Night is supposed, for some felonious purpose, to shut up the stars in her dark lantern? Certainly not. But in the present age, correct and rational as it is, had 'Comus' been written, we should not perhaps have had some of the greatest beauties of its wild and romantic imagery.—T. WARTON.

[73] Ver. 205. *A thousand fantasies*
Begin to throng into my memory, &c.

Milton had here perhaps a remembrance of Shakspeare, 'King John,' a. v. s. 7.

> With many legions of strange fantasies,
> Which, in their throng and press to that last hold,
> Confound themselves. T. WARTON.

Much of our own island superstition is crowded into these lines: it is true that in a city guarded by a regular police and lighted by patent gas, and infested by sharpers

and pickpockets, man, even though inclined to superstitious dread, cannot feel fearful of "calling shapes," and "beckoning shadows," and "airy tongues:" but let him have a haunted road—such as that along which Tam o'Shanter rode—to travel on at midnight: let his local knowledge supply him with the recollection of all the misdeeds and murders perpetrated for three miles round: let there be a gloomy wood on one side of the way, and an old desolate burial-ground on the other: let him hear a sound advancing behind him, and let him see before him a doddered tree, between him and the blue sky, on which some man within his own memory hanged himself; and if he feels not something like dread upon him, he is either a very bold man or a very unimaginative one. The writer of this has heard an old gentleman, who had served with distinction in the British army, assert, oftener than once, that on riding one night past an old churchyard in a lonely part of the country, a white phantom started up from among the grave-stones, and stretched a long pale skinny hand towards the bridle of his horse. A pious ejaculation, and the application of the spur, freed him from all danger; but it was evident that he thought the sight he saw was of the other world, and not supplied by his imagination, excited into a creative fit by the solemn hour and haunted place.—C.

[74] Ver. 207.

Of calling shapes, and beckoning shadows dire, &c.

I remember these superstitions, which are here finely applied, in the ancient Voyages of Marco Paolo the Venetian: he is speaking of the vast and perilous desert of Lop in Asia. "Cernuntur et audiuntur in eo, interdiu, et sæpius noctu, dæmonum variæ illusiones: unde viatoribus summe cavendum est, ne multum ab invicem seipsos dissocient, aut aliquis a tergo sese diutius impediat: alioquin, quamprimum propter montes et calles quispiam comitum suorum aspectum perdiderit, non facile ad eos perveniet:

nam audiuntur ibi voces dæmonum, qui solitarie incedentes propriis appellant nominibus, voces fingentes illorum quos comitari se putant, ut a recto itinere abductos in perniciem deducant."—De Regionib. Oriental. l. i. c. 44.—T. Warton.

[75] Ver. 208. *Syllable.* Pronounce distinctly. As in Ph. Fletcher's 'Poet. Misc.' p. 85. "Yet syllabled in flesh-spell'd characters."—T. Warton.

[76] Ver. 214.

Thou hovering angel, girt with golden wings.

Thus, in Shakspeare's 'Lover's Complaint,' "Which, like a cherubin, above them hover'd." But "hovering" is here applied with peculiar propriety to the angel Hope, in sight, on the wing; and if not approaching, yet not flying away; still appearing. Contemplation soars on golden wings, 'Il. Pens.' v. 52: and we have that "golden-winged host," in the 'Ode on the Death of an Infant,' st. ix.—T. Warton.

[77] Ver. 215.

And thou, unblemish'd form of Chastity! &c.

In the same strain, Fletcher's Shepherdess in the soliloquy just cited:—

> Then, strongest Chastity,
> Be thou my strongest guard; for here I'll dwell
> In opposition against fate and hell. T. Warton.

[78] Ver. 221. *Was I deceived, or did a sable cloud,* &c. These lines are turned like that verse of Ovid, 'Fast.' lib. v. 545: "Fallor? an arma sonant? non fallimur: arma sonabant."—Hurd.

See also note on Eleg. v. 5. The repetition, arising from the conviction and confidence of an unaccusing conscience, is inimitably beautiful. When all succour seems to be lost,

Heaven unexpectedly presents the silver lining of a sable cloud to the virtuous.—T. WARTON.

[79] Ver. 226. *I cannot halloo to my brothers*, &c. So the jailer's daughter in Beaumont and Fletcher, benighted also and alone in a wood, whose character affords one of the finest female mad scenes in our language, 'Two Noble Kins.' a. iii. s. 2. She is in search of Palamon.

> I cannot halloo, &c.
> I have heard
> Strange howls this livelong night, &c. T. WARTON.

[80] Ver. 230. *That livest unseen*. So Sylvester, 'Du Bartas,' p. 1210.

> Babbling echo, voice of vallies,
> Aierie elfe exempt from view. TODD.

[81] Ver. 233. *Violet-embroider'd*. This is a beautiful compound epithet, and the combination of the two words that compose it, natural and easy.—JOS. WARTON.

[82] Ver. 234. *Love-lorn*. Deprived of her mate; as "lass-lorn" in the 'Tempest,' a. iv. s. 2.—T. WARTON.

[83] Ver. 235.

> *Nightly to thee her sad song mourneth well.*

Compare Virgil, 'Georg.' iv. 513.

> illa
> Flet noctem, ramoque sedens miserabile carmen
> Integrat, &c. TODD.

[84] Ver. 236. *A gentle pair*. So Fletcher, 'Faith. Shep.' a. i. s. 1.

> A gentle pair
> Have promised equal love. T. WARTON.

[65] Ver. 238. *O, if thou have*
Hid them in some flowery cave.

Here is a seeming inaccuracy for the sake of the rhyme: but the sense being hypothetical and contingent, we will suppose an ellipsis of "shouldest" before "have." A verse in St. John affords an apposite illustration:—"If thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him," xx. 15.—T. WARTON.

[66] Ver. 240. *Tell me but where.* Mr. Steevens suggests that part of the address to the sun, which Southern has put into the mouth of Oroonoko, is evidently copied from this passage:—

> Or, if thy sister goddess has preferr'd
> Her beauty to the skies to be a star,
> O, tell me where she shines. T. WARTON.

[67] Ver. 241. *Daughter of the sphere.* Milton has given her a much nobler and more poetical original than any of the ancient mythologists: he supposes her to owe her first existence to the reverberation of the music of the spheres; in consequence of which he had just before called the horizon her "aery shell:" and from the gods, like other celestial beings of the classical order, she came down to men.—WARBURTON.

[68] Ver. 243.
And give resounding grace to all Heaven's harmonies.

That is the grace of their being accompanied with an echo. The goddess Echo was of peculiar service in the machinery of a Mask, and therefore often introduced.—T. WARTON.

This Alexandrine, as well as almost all the Alexandrines, has a magnificent swell, and shows that Milton had a fine lyrical ear.

[89] Ver. 244.

Can any mortal mixture of earth's mould
Breathe such divine enchanting ravishment?

This was plainly personal. Here the poet availed himself of an opportunity of paying a just compliment to the voice and skill of a real songstress; just as the two boys are complimented for their beauty and elegance of figure: and afterwards, the strains that "might create a soul under the ribs of death," are brought home, and found to be the voice "of my most honour'd Lady," v. 564. where the real and assumed characters of the speaker are blended.—T. Warton.

[90] Ver. 252. *I have oft heard*
My mother Circe with the sirens three, &c.

Originally from Ovid, 'Metam.' xiv. 264, of Circe:—

> Nereides, Nymphæque simul, quæ vellera motis
> Nulla trahunt digitis, nec fila sequentia ducunt,
> Gramina disponunt; sparsosque sine ordine flores
> Secernunt calathis, variasque coloribus herbas.
> Ipsa, quod hæ faciunt, opus exigit; ipsa quid usus
> Quoque sit in folio, quæ sit concordia mistis,
> Novit; et advertens pensas examinat herbas.

Milton calls the Naiades (he should have said Nereides) "flowery-kirtled," because they were employed in collecting flowers.—T. Warton.

[91] Ver. 256.

Who, as they sung, would take the prison'd soul,
And lap it in Elysium.

The mermaidens of modern tale and story inherit all the powers of the sirens of classic song: they are described as women to the waist, and fair, with bright eyes; and locks which they are continually braiding: nor has fancy hesitated to supply them with small round looking-glasses, in which seamen aver they are fond of surveying their charms. The

parts below the waves may be given up to the imagination; they are supposed to be otherwise than lovely; but the part above, the glowing words of poesy have been called in to describe; nor has any poet surpassed in description the loveliness with which popular belief has endowed them. One of those sea-maidens haunted, if we may credit the district legends, a river in Galloway: the charms of her person were even surpassed by those of her voice: the first verse which she sung caused the wild birds to leave their nests, nor regard their enemy the owl; at the second verse, the fox leaped up from the lamb he had worried, and wiping his bloody lips, wondered what this might mean; but with the third verse, a gallant young bridegroom was so bewitched, that he left his bridal train, and approaching too close to the mermaiden, was seized and carried into one of her sea-palaces, and never more returned to upper air. Other legends, both Swedish and Scottish, relate similar stories of those alluring dames: one of their lovers, however, contrived by stratagem to escape from "coral caves and beds of pearl," and was heard to declare, that lovely as the sea-maidens were, they had a maritime savour about them which was any thing but ambrosial.—C.

[92] Ver. 257. *Scylla wept,*
And chid her barking waves into attention,
And fell Charybdis murmur'd soft applause.

Silius Italicus, of a Sicilian shepherd tuning his reed, 'Bell. Pun.' xix. 467:—"Scyllæi tacuere canes; stetit atra Charybdis."—T. Warton.

The "barking waves," it must be added, are from Virgil, 'Æn.' vii. 588. "multis circumlatrantibus undis."—Todd.

[93] Ver. 261. *And in sweet madness robb'd it of itself,* &c. Compare Shakspeare, 'Winter's Tale,' a. and s. ult.:—

O sweet Paulina!
Make me to think so twenty years together;

No settled senses of the world can match
The pleasure of that madness. TODD.

[94] Ver. 265. *Hail, foreign wonder!* Thus Fletcher, 'Faith. Shep.' a. v. s. 1. But perhaps our author had an unperceived retrospect to the 'Tempest,' a. i. s. 2:—

FER. Most sure the goddess
On whom these airs attend!———
——— My prime request,
Which I do last pronounce, is, O you wonder!
If you be maid or no? T. WARTON.

[95] Ver. 270. Comus's address to the Lady, from v. 265, to the end of this line, is in a very high style of classical gallantry. As Cicero says of Plato's language, that if Jupiter were to speak Greek, he would speak as Plato has written; so we may say of this language of Milton, that, if Jupiter were to speak English, he would express himself in this manner. The passage is exceeding beautiful in every respect; but all readers of taste will acknowledge, that the style of it is much raised by the expression "unless the goddess," an elliptical expression, unusual in our language, though common enough in Greek and Latin. But if we were to fill it up, and say, "unless thou beest the goddess;" how flat and insipid would it make the composition, compared with what it is!—LORD MONBODDO.

[96] Ver. 277, &c. Here is an imitation of those scenes in the Greek tragedies, where the dialogue proceeds by question and answer, a single verse being allotted to each. The Greeks, doubtless, found a grace in this sort of dialogue: as it was one of the characteristics of the Greek drama, it was natural enough for our young poet, passionately fond of the Greek tragedies, to affect this peculiarity; but he judged better in his riper years, there being no instance of this dialogue, I think, in his 'Samson Agonistes.'—HURD.

[97] Ver. 282.

To seek in the valley some cool friendly spring.

Here Mr. Sympson observed with me, that this is a different reason from what she had assigned before, v. 186:—"To bring me berries," &c. They might have left her on both accounts.—NEWTON.

[98] Ver. 285. *Forestalling.* The word "forestall," was formerly used in the sense of prevent, hinder, &c. as in 'Par. Lost,' b. x. 1024.—T. WARTON.

[99] Ver. 289.

Were they of manly prime, or youthful bloom?

Were they young men, or striplings? "Prime" is perfection. "Nature here wanton'd as in her prime," 'Par. Lost,' b. v. 295. Again, b. iii. 646:—

> And now a stripling cherub he appears,
> Not of the prime, &c. T. WARTON.

[100] Ver. 290. *Their unrazor'd lips.* The unpleasant epithet "unrazor'd" has one much like it in the 'Tempest,' a. ii. s. 5:—

> till new-born chins
> Are rough and razorable. T. WARTON.

[101] Ver. 291. *What time the labour'd ox*
In his loose traces from the furrow came.

The notation of time is in the pastoral manner, as in Virg. 'Ecl.' ii. 66. and Hor. 'Od.' III. vi. 41.—NEWTON.

[102] Ver. 293. *And the swink'd hedger at his supper sat.* The "swink'd hedger's supper" is from nature: and "hedger," a word new in poetry, although of common use, has a good effect. "Swink'd" is tired, fatigued.—T. WARTON.

[103] Ver. 299. *The element.* In the north of England this term is still made use of for the sky.—THYER.

[104] Ver. 301. *And play in the plighted clouds.* The lustre of Milton's brilliant imagery is half obscured, while "plighted" remains unexplained. We are to understand the braided or embroidered clouds; in which certain airy elemental beings are most poetically supposed to sport, thus producing a variety of transient and dazzling colours, as our author says of the sun, 'Par. Lost,' b. iv. 596.

> Arraying with reflected purple and gold
> The clouds that on his western throne attend.

It is obvious to observe that the modern word is "plaited."—T. WARTON.

Visions of the kind intimated by the poet were not uncommon in other days. It is related, that a traveller, happening to be both hungry and benighted among the pastoral hills of the Border, resolved to quit the road on which he was walking, and follow a little stream or brook which he knew would conduct him soon to some shepherd's hut or farm-house: the moon was up; the night was quiet and clear; no other sound save that of the stream was to be heard. On entering a little glen, he was startled to see a green table placed across the rivulet; and both his eyes and his sharpened sense of smell told him that it was furnished with meat and wine. He stood and gazed: the plates were of silver, the cups of gold; the meat seemed savoury, and the wine scented all the air. He could not for his heart resist the temptation; but he had the grace, before he began, to say, "With your leave, good folk:" the words were not well out of his mouth, till fairies started up all around the table: one helped him to meat, another to wine; while a third, equally courteous, fashioned a good strong steady chair out of a mushroom for his accommodation. At parting, they bestowed a cup on him of a miraculous make, for it was ever full of wine, let the drinker be ever so drouthy. It continued in the family, till a guest,

more devout than ordinary, proceeded to ask God's blessing on the liquor; when the cup became in an instant dry, and it is said continued so.—C.

[105] Ver. 306. *Due west it rises from this shrubby point.* Milton had perhaps a predilection for the west, from a similar but more picturesque information in 'As you like it,' a. iv. s. i.

West of this place, down in the neighbour bottom, &c.
T. WARTON.

[106] Ver. 312.

Dingle, or bushy dell of this wild wood,
And every bosky bourn from side to side, &c.

The word "dingle" is still in use, and signifies a valley between two steep hills. "Dimble" is the same word. A "bourn," the sense of which in this passage has never been explained with precision, properly signifies here, a winding, deep, and narrow valley, with a rivulet at the bottom. In the present instance, the declivities are interspersed with trees and bushes. This sort of valley Comus knew from "side to side:" he knew both the opposite sides or ridges, and had consequently travelled the intermediate space. Such situations have no other name in the west of England at this day. In the waste and open countries, bourns are the grand separations or divisions of one part of the country from another, and are natural limits of districts and parishes: for bourn is simply nothing more than a boundary.—T. WARTON.

[107] Ver. 325. *And courts of princes, where it first was named.* Mr. Sympson perceived with me that this is plainly taken from Spenser, 'Faer. Qu.' vi. i. 1.

Of court, it seems, men courtesie do call,
For that it there most useth to abound. NEWTON.

[108] Ver. 331. *Unmuffle.* "Muffle" was not so low a

word as at present. Drayton, 'Heroic. Epist.' vol. i. p. 251. of night:—

And in thick vapours muffle up the world.
T. WARTON.

See also Shakspeare, 'Romeo and Juliet,' a. v. s. 3. "Muffle me, night, awhile."—TODD.

[109] Ver. 332. *That wont'st to love the traveller's benison.* Mr. Richardson and Mr. Thyer here saw with me, that there was an allusion to Spenser, 'Faer. Qu.' iii. i. 43.

As when fayre Cynthia, in darksome night,
Is in a noyous cloud enveloped,
Where she may finde the substance thin and light,
Breakes forth her silver beames, and her bright head
Discovers to the world discomfited;
Of the poore traveller that went astray,
With thousand blessings she is heried, NEWTON.

[110] Ver. 333. *Stoop thy pale visage through an amber cloud.* See 'Il. Pens.' v. 71.

And oft, as if her head she bow'd,
Stooping through a fleecy cloud. TODD.

[111] Ver. 334. *Disinherit Chaos.* This expression should be animadverted upon, as hyperbolical and bombast, and akin to that in Scriblerus, "Mow my beard."—JOS. WARTON.

[112] Ver. 339. *Visit us*, &c. See 'Par. Lost,' b. ii. 398. "Not unvisited of heaven's fair light:" and St. Luke, i. 78. "The day-spring from on high hath visited us."—T. WARTON.

[113] Ver. 340. *Long-level'd rule of streaming light.* The sun is said to "level his evening rays," 'Par. Lost,' b. iv. 543.—T. WARTON.

[114] Ver. 341. *Our star of Arcady,*
Or Tyrian cynosure.

Our greater or lesser bear-star. Calisto, the daughter of Lycaon, king of Arcadia, was changed into the greater bear, called also Helice, and her son Arcas into the lesser, called also Cynosura, by observing of which the Tyrians and Sidonians steered their course, as the Grecian mariners did by the other. See Ovid, 'Fast.' iii. 107. and Val. Flaccus, 'Argon.' i. 17.—NEWTON.

[115] Ver. 344. *The folded flocks*, &c. Compare, as Mr. Warton directs, 'Par. Lost,' b. iv. 185. And see the notes on Milton's 'Epitaphium Damonis,' ver. 140.—TODD.

[116] Ver. 349. *Innumerous.* "Innumerous" is uncommon. But see 'Par. Lost,' b. vii. 455. "Innumerous living creatures." The expression, "innumerous boughs," has been adopted in Pope's Odyssey.—T. WARTON.

[117] Ver. 359. *Exquisite.* "Exquisite" was not now uncommon in its more original signification. Beaumont and Fletcher, 'Little Fr. Law,' a. v. s. 1.

They are exquisite in mischief. T. WARTON.

[118] Ver. 360. *To cast the fashion of uncertain evils.* A metaphor taken from the founder's art.—WARBURTON.

Rather from astrology, as "to cast a nativity." The meaning is to predict, prefigure, compute, &c.—T. WARTON.

[119] Ver. 361. This line obscures the thought, and loads the expression. It had been better out, as any one may see by reading the passage without it.—WARBURTON.

[120] Ver. 369.
As that the single want of light and noise
(Not being in danger, as I trust she is not)

A profound critic cites the entire context, as containing a

beautiful example of Milton's using the parenthesis, a figure which he has frequently used with great effect.—'Origin and Progr. of Language,' b. iv. p. ii. vol. iii. p. 76. Some perhaps may think this beauty quite accidental and undesigned. A parenthesis is often thrown in, for the sake of explanation, after a passage is written.—T. WARTON.

[121] Ver. 373. *Virtue could see to do what Virtue would*
By her own radiant light.

It has been noticed by many critics, that this noble sentiment was inspired from Spenser, 'Faerie Queene,' i. i. 12:—

Vertue gives herselfe light through darknesse for to wade.

But may not Jonson here be also noticed, who, in his Mask, 'Pleasure reconciled to Virtue,' (to which I have ventured to assign other allusions in 'Comus') says of Virtue;—

She, she it is in darknesse shines;
'Tis she that still herself refines,
By her own light, to every eye. TODD.

[122] Ver. 376. *Oft seeks to sweet retired solitude.* For the same uncommon use of "seek," Mr. Bowle cites Bale's 'Examinacyon of A. Askew,' p. 24. "Hath not he moche nede of helpe who seeketh to soche a surgeon?" So also in Isaiah, xi. 10. "To it shall the Gentiles seek."—T. WARTON.

[123] Ver. 377. *Her best nurse, Contemplation.* In Sidney's 'Arcadia,' Solitude is the nurse of Contemplation, b. i. p. 31. edit. 1674. "Such contemplation, or more excellent, I enjoy in solitariness; and my solitariness is perchance the nurse of these contemplations."—DUNSTER.

[124] Ver. 378. *She plumes her feathers.* I believe the true reading to be "prunes," which Lawes ignorantly altered to

"'plumes," afterwards imperceptibly continued in the poet's own edition. To "prune wings," is to smoothe, or set them in order, when ruffled: for this is the leading idea. Spenser, 'Faer. Qu.' ii. iii. 36:—

> She 'gins her feathers foule disfigured
> Proudly to prune. T. Warton.

[125] Ver. 380. *Were all-to ruffled.* So read as in editions 1637, 1645, and 1673. Not *too*, nimis. "All-to," or "al-to," is entirely. See Tyrwhitt's Glossary, Chaucer, v. *To.* And Upton's Glossary, Spenser, v. *All.* Various instances occur in Chaucer and Spenser, and in later writers. The corruption, supposed to be an emendation, "all too ruffled," began with Tickell, who had no knowledge of our old language, and has been continued by Fenton, and Dr. Newton. Tonson has the true reading, in 1695, and 1705.—T. Warton.

See Judges ix. 53:—"And a certain woman cast a piece of a millstone upon Abimelech's head, and all-to brake his skull:" for so it should be printed. Some editions of the Bible corruptly read, "all to break," placing the verb improperly in the infinitive mood.—Todd.

[126] Ver. 381.

> *He that has light within his own clear breast,*
> *May sit in the centre, and enjoy bright day.*

So, in his 'Prose Works,' i. 217. edit. 1698:—"The actions of just and pious men do not darken in their middle course; but Solomon tells us, they are as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."—Todd.

[127] Ver. 385. *Himself is his own dungeon.* In 'Samson Agonistes,' v. 155, the Chorus apply this solemn and forcible expression to the captive and afflicted hero:—

> Thou art become (O worst imprisonment!)
> The dungeon of thyself. Todd.

[128] Ver. 389. *And sits as safe as in a senate-house.* Not many years after this was written, Milton's friends showed that the safety of a senate-house was not inviolable: but, when the people turn legislators, what place is safe from the tumults of innovation, and the insults of disobedience? —T. Warton.

[129] Ver. 393. *But Beauty,* &c. These sentiments are heightened from the 'Faithful Shepherdess,' a. i. s. 1:—

Can such beauty be
Safe in its own guard, and not drawe the eye
Of him that passeth on, to greedy gaze, &c.
T. Warton.

[130] Ver. 395. *With unenchanted eye.* That is, which cannot be enchanted. Here is more flattery; but certainly such as was justly due, and which no poet in similar circumstances could resist the opportunity, or rather the temptation, of paying.—T. Warton.

When the christian religion supplanted the pagan worship, such was the attachment even of zealous converts to the old established days of jubilee and joy in honour of the gods and goddesses of Olympus, that it was found necessary to do something of the sort for the christian cause; and accordingly a long line of saints, male and female, took possession of the set-times of heathen jubilee, and reigned in the stead of Diana and Apollo. In like manner, the domestic mythology of the pagans yielded to that of the christian; and the deeds which the infernal gods wrought of old were now accomplished by their successor Satan. Instead of a dragon being placed as a sentinel over concealed treasure of any kind, one of the inferior fiends was reluctantly compelled to perform the office: the corsairs in latter times carried this much farther, and, it is said, slew a prisoner over their treasure-chest, and commanded his spirit to keep watch and ward. When

Dalswinton castle was stormed and taken by Robert Bruce, Comyn, who was very rich, caused his strong-box to be sunk in one of the deepest pools of the Nith, which in those days ran close by the castle walls. Times of peace returned, and a diver was employed to search for the gold; but when he descended to the bottom of the pool, he found, it is said, a fiend seated on the lid of the treasure-chest, who not only seemed disposed to contest the matter, but, as our version of the legend avers, actually held a human victim under each paw, and with his mouth gaped wistfully for a third. Two divers it seems had tried the adventure before, and failed; nor did the third and last succeed.—C.

[131] Ver. 402. *And let a single helpless maiden pass*, &c. Rosalind argues in the same manner, in 'As you Like It,' a. i. s. 3:—

> Alas! what danger will it be to us,
> Maids as we are, to travel forth so far!
> Beauty provoketh thieves sooner than gold.
>
> T. Warton.

[132] Ver. 410. *Yet, where an equal poise*, &c. "Boni animi proprium est in dubiis meliora supponere, donec probetur in contrarium," Mat. Paris, 'Hist.' p. 774.—Bowle.

[133] Ver. 413. *And gladly banish squint suspicion.* Alluding probably, in the epithet, to Spenser's description of Suspicion, in his Mask of Cupid, 'Faery Queen,' iii. xii. 15:—

> For he was foul, ill-favoured, and grim,
> Under his eye-brows looking still asaunce.
>
> Thyer.

[134] Ver. 422.

And, like a quiver'd nymph with arrows keen.

I make no doubt but Milton in this passage had his eye

upon Spenser's Belphœbe, whose character, arms, and manner of life perfectly correspond with this description.—THYER.

[135] Ver. 423. *May trace huge forests*, &c. Shakspeare's Oberon, as Mr. Bowle observes, would breed his child-knight to "trace the forests wild," 'Midsummer Night's Dream,' a. ii. s. 3. In Jonson's 'Masques,' a fairy says, vol. v. 206:—

> Only we are free to trace
> All his grounds, as he to chase. T. WARTON.

[136] Ver. 424. *Infamous hills*. Horace, 'Od.' i. iii. 20:—"Infames scopulos," as Dr. Newton observes. P. Fletcher, in his 'Pisc. Ecl.' published in 1633, has "infamous woods and downs."—TODD.

[137] Ver. 425.

Where, through the sacred rays of Chastity, &c.

See Fletcher, 'Faithful Shepherdess,' a. i. s. 1.—T. WARTON.

[138] Ver. 426. *Mountaineer*. A mountaineer seems to have conveyed the idea of something very savage and ferocious. In the 'Tempest,' a. iii. s. 3:—

> Who would believe that there were mountaineers
> Dewlapp'd like bulls?

In 'Cymbeline,' a. iv. s. 2:—

> Who call'd me traitor, mountaineer. T. WARTON.

[139] Ver. 430. *Unblench'd*. Unblinded, unconfounded.—WARTON.

[140] Ver. 432. *Some say, no evil thing that walks by night*. Milton had Shakspeare in his head, 'Hamlet,' a. i. s. 1:—

> Some say, that ever 'gainst that season comes
> Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated—
> But then, they say, no spirit walks abroad.

Another superstition is ushered in with the same form in 'Paradise Lost,' b. x. 575. And the same form occurs in the description of the physical effects of Adam's fall, b. x. 668.—T. WARTON.

[141] Ver. 433. *In fog or fire, by lake or moorish fen*, &c. Milton here had his eye on the 'Faithful Shepherdess,' a. i. He has borrowed the sentiment, but raised and improved the diction:—

I have heard (my mother told it me,
And now I do believe it) if I keep
My virgin flower uncropt, pure, chaste, and fair,
No goblin, wood-god, fairy, elfe, or fiend,
Satyr, or other power that haunts the groves,
Shall hurt my body, or by vain illusion
Draw me to wander after idle fires;
Or voices calling me, &c. NEWTON.

[142] Ver. 434. *Stubborn unlaid ghost*
That breaks his magick chains at curfeu time.

An unlaid ghost was among the most vexatious plagues of the world of spirits. It is one of the evils deprecated at Fidele's grave, in 'Cymbeline,' a. iv. s. 2:—

No exorciser harm thee,
Nor no witchcraft charm thee,
Ghost unlaid forbear thee! T. WARTON.

That Milton looked with learned eyes on the superstitious beliefs which he wrought into his verse, these lines bear proof, but his learning adorned rather than oppressed popular fiction: the horned and hoofed fiend of Gothic belief became in his hands a sort of infernal Apollo: the witch who drained cows dry, shook ripe corn, and sunk ventorous boats, grew with him a "blue meagre hag," a description which inspired the pencil of Fuseli. The "midnight hags" of British belief suffered a sore change in their persons during the course of time. When we first hear of them, instead of all being "beldames auld and

droll," they counted in their ranks much youth and beauty; music and dancing made a part of their entertainments; nor did they hesitate to mount their ragweed nags; and, picking up some handsome and wandering youth by the way, carry him with them; and, initiating him into the mysteries of love and wine, set him down on Mount Caucasus, and let him find his way back to Plinlimmon or Shehallion as he best could. The witches of latter days were all old, withered, unlovely, and repulsive; their pranks, too, were of a low order, and their spells easily averted. A wand of mountain-ash protected a whole herd of cows; a neck-band of the red berries of the same tree was a full security to the wearer; nay, devout and skilful people retaliated upon them, and made them suffer greater miseries than they were able to inflict.—C.

[143] Ver. 436. *Swart faery of the mine.* In the Gothic system of pneumatology, mines were supposed to be inhabited by various sorts of spirits. See Olaus Magnus's chapter 'De Metallicis Dæmonibus, Hist. Gent. Septentrional.' In an old translation of Lavaterus 'De Spectris et Lemuribus,' is the following passage:—"Pioners or diggers for metall do affirme, that in many mines there appeare straunge shapes and spirites, who are apparelled like vnto the laborers in the pit. These wander vp and downe in caues and underminings, and seeme to besturre themselves in all kinde of labor; as, to digge after the veine, to carrie together the oare, to put it into basketts, and to turn the winding wheele to draw it vp, when in very deed they do nothinge lesse," &c.—'Of Ghostes and Spirites walking by night,' &c. Lond. 1572. ch. xvi. p. 73. And hence we see why Milton gives this species of fairy a swarthy or dark complexion.—T. Warton.

The true British goblin, called elsewhere by Milton the "lubbar fiend," and by the Scotch poets the "billie-blin" or "brownie," is a sort of drudging domestic fiend, slightly in-

clined to work mischief on sluttish housemaids and lazy hinds, but not at all disposed to injure virgins, or harm the good and the industrious. Indeed the main business of the brownie seems to have been to watch over the flocks, the crops, and the fortunes of the house to which he was attached. He has been known to reap a twenty-acre field of corn between twilight and dawn, as much for the purpose of astonishing the reapers, as to prevent it from being shaken by the wind. Milton himself ascribes to him the power of thrashing as much grain at a time as ten day-labourers could do; and tradition says, that on one occasion, when a drowsy domestic was unwilling to ride and bring the midwife for the mistress of the mansion, brownie mounted the saddled horse, brought the dame with supernatural haste, and finished his excursion by flogging the lazy menial with the iron-bitted bridle till he cried for mercy. The elfin page of Scott is a more elegant sort of brownie: but tradition always represents the latter as a solitary creature, that shuns the sight of man, and of whom only one glimpse in twenty years could be obtained by the most watchful and wary. He accepted only the choicest food, such as cream and honey; his stature was about half the human height; his complexion was brown; his arms long, and his strength immense. He seems to have been utterly naked, and it is known that he had no partiality to clothes; for when the brownie of Lethan-hall was presented with a new mantle and hood, he was heard wailing like a child for three nights; after which he departed, and returned no more.—C.

[144] Ver. 441. *Hence*, &c. Milton, I fancy, took the hint of this beautiful mythological interpretation from a dialogue of Lucian betwixt Venus and Cupid; where the mother asking her son how, after having attacked all the other deities, he came to spare Minerva and Diana, Cupid replies, that the former looked so fiercely at him, and frightened him so

with the Gorgon head which she wore upon her breast, that he durst not meddle with her; and that as to Diana, she was always so employed in hunting, that he could not catch her.—THYER.

[145] Ver. 445. *The frivolous bolt of Cupid.* This reminds one of the "dribbling dart of love," in 'Measure for Measure.' "Bolt," I believe, is properly the arrow of a cross-bow.—T. WARTON.

See Shakspeare, 'Mids. Night's Dream,' a. ii. s. 2:—

Yet mark'd I where the bolt of Cupid fell. TODD.

[146] Ver. 450. *But rigid looks,* &c. "Rigid looks" refer to the snaky locks, and "noble grace" to the beautiful face, as Gorgon is represented on ancient gems.—WARBURTON.

[147] Ver. 451. *Brute violence.* See 'Par. Reg.' b. i. 218. —THYER.

[148] Ver. 455. *A thousand liveried angels lacky her.* The idea, without the lowness of allusion and expression, is repeated in 'Par. Lost,' b. viii. 559:—

About her as a guard angelick placed. T. WARTON.

[149] Ver. 458. *Tell her of things that no gross ear can hear.* See 'Arcades,' v. 72. This dialogue between the two Brothers is an amicable contest between fact and philosophy: the younger draws his arguments from common apprehension, and the obvious appearance of things: the elder proceeds on a profounder knowledge, and argues from abstracted principles. Here the difference of their ages is properly made subservient to a contrast of character: but this slight variety must have been insufficient to keep so prolix and learned a disputation alive upon the stage: it must have languished, however adorned with the fairest

flowers of eloquence. The whole dialogue, which indeed is little more than a solitary declamation in blank verse, much resembles the manner of our author's Latin Prolusions, where philosophy is enforced by pagan fable and poetical allusion.—T. Warton.

[150] Ver. 461. *The unpolluted temple of the mind.* For this beautiful metaphor he was probably indebted to St. John, ii. 21. "He spake of the temple of his body:" and Shakspeare has the same, 'Tempest,' a. i. s. 6:—

There 's nothing ill can dwell in such a temple.

Newton.

[151] Ver. 462. *And turns it by degrees to the soul's essence.* This is agreeable to the system of the materialists, of which Milton was one.—Warburton.

The same notion of body's working up to spirit Milton afterwards introduced into his 'Par. Lost,' b. v. 469, &c. which is there, I think, liable to some objection, as he was entirely at liberty to have chosen a more rational system, and as it is also put into the mouth of an archangel: but in this place it falls in so well with the poet's design, gives such a force and strength to this encomium on chastity, and carries in it such a dignity of sentiment; that, however repugnant it may be to our philosophical ideas, it cannot miss striking and delighting every virtuous and intelligent reader.—Thyer.

[152] Ver. 464. *By unchaste looks,* &c. "He [Christ] censures an unchaste look to be an adultery already committed: another time he passes over actual adultery with less reproof than for an unchaste look," 'Divorce,' b. ii. c. 1. Matth. v. 28.—T. Warton.

[153] Ver. 467. *The soul grows clotted by contagion,* &c. I cannot resist the pleasure of translating a passage in Plato's

'Phædon,' which Milton here evidently copies:—"A soul with such affections, does it not fly away to something divine and resembling itself? To something divine, immortal, and wise? Whither when it arrives, it becomes happy; being freed from error, ignorance, fear, love, and other human evils. But if it departs from the body polluted and impure, with which it has been long linked in a state of familiarity and friendship, and by whose pleasures and appetites it has been bewitched, so as to think nothing else true, but what is corporeal, and which may be touched, seen, drunk, and used for the gratifications of lust; at the same time, if it has been accustomed to hate, fear, or shun whatever is dark and invisible to the human eye, yet discerned and approved by philosophy;—I ask, if a soul so disposed, will go sincere and disencumbered from the body? By no means. And will it not be, as I have supposed, infected and involved with corporeal contagion, which an acquaintance and converse with the body, from a perpetual association, has made congenial? So I think. But, my friend, we must pronounce that substance to be ponderous, depressive, and earthy, which such a soul draws with it; and therefore it is burdened by such a clog, and again is dragged off to some visible place, for fear of that which is hidden and unseen; and, as they report, retires to tombs and sepulchres, among which the shadowy phantasms of these brutal souls, being loaded with somewhat visible, have often actually appeared. Probably, O Socrates: and it is equally probable, O Cebes, that these are the souls of wicked, not virtuous men, which are forced to wander amidst burial-places, suffering the punishment of an impious life: and they so long are seen hovering about the monuments of the dead, till, from the accompaniment of the sensualities of corporeal nature, they are again clothed with a body," &c. Phæd. Opp. Platon. p. 386. edit. Lugdun. 1590. fol. An admirable writer, the late bishop of Worcester, has justly remarked, that "this poetical phi-

losophy nourished the fine spirits of Milton's time, though it corrupted some." It is highly probable, that Henry More, the great Platonist, who was Milton's contemporary at Christ's-college, might have given his mind an early bias to the study of Plato.—T. WARTON.

[154] Ver. 468. *Imbodies, and imbrutes.* Thus also Satan speaks of the debasement and corruption of its original divine essence, 'Par. Lost,' b. ix. 165:—

mix'd with bestial slime,
This essence to incarnate and imbrute,
That to the highth of Deity aspired.

T. WARTON.

[155] Ver. 476. *How charming is divine philosophy.* This is an immediate reference to the foregoing speech, in which the divine philosophy of Plato concerning the nature and condition of the human soul after death is so largely and so nobly displayed. Much the same sentiments appear in the 'Tractate on Education:'—"I shall not detain you longer in the demonstration of what we should not do; but straight conduct you to a hill-side, where I will point ye out the right path of a vertuous and noble education, laborious indeed at the first ascent, but also so smooth, so green, so full of goodly prospect and melodious sounds, that the harp of Orpheus was not more charming," p. 101. ed. 1675. And see 'Par. Reg.' b. i. 478, &c.—T. WARTON.

[156] Ver. 478. *But musical as is Apollo's lute.* Perhaps from 'Love's Labour 's Lost,' as Mr. Bowle suggests, a. iv. s. 3.

As sweet and musical
As bright Apollo's lute. T. WARTON.

[157] Ver. 494. *Thyrsis? whose artful strains,* &c. A compliment to Lawes, who personated the Spirit. We have

just such another above, v. 86, but this being spoken by another, comes with better grace and propriety.; or, to use Dr. Newton's pertinent expression, is more genteel. Milton's eagerness to praise his friend Lawes makes him here forget the circumstances of the fable: he is more intent on the musician than the shepherd, who comes at a critical season, and whose assistance in the present difficulty should have hastily been asked: but time is lost in a needless encomium, and in idle inquiries how the shepherd could possibly find out this solitary part of the forest: the youth, however, seems to be ashamed or unwilling to tell the unlucky accident that had befallen his sister. Perhaps the real boyism of the brother, which yet should have been forgotten by the poet, is to be taken into the account.—T. Warton.

Let it be remembered that 'Comus' is a drama of poetic description rather than theatric interest: besides, I conceive it exactly in nature for such young adventurers to delight in having their solitude and distress relieved by the acquisition of the aid and company of a faithful domestic of the family: and I farther believe that it is a fine touch of real nature to represent them at the immediate moment forgetting, in a certain degree, their own immediate distress, and recurring to the well-known amusements and employments of their old shepherd, his skill in pastoral music, his zealous care of his flock, &c. all these domestic circumstances recurring to their minds. Surely this is perfectly in nature; and if we criticise such passages, it should certainly be to commend and not to censure.—Dunster.

[158] Ver. 495. *Madrigal.* The madrigal was a species of musical composition, now actually in practice, and in high vogue. Lawes, here intended, had composed madrigals: so had Milton's father. The word is not here thrown out at random.—T. Warton.

[159] Ver. 500.

How couldst thou find this dark sequester'd nook?

Thus the shepherdess Clorin to Thenot, Fletcher's 'Faith. Shep.' a. ii. s. 1.—T. Warton.

[160] Ver. 509. *Sadly.* Sadly, soberly, seriously, as the word is frequently used by our old authors, and in 'Par. Lost,' b. vi. 541.—Newton.

[161] Ver. 516.

Storied of old, in high immortal verse,
Of dire chimeras, and enchanted isles,
And rifted rocks whose entrance leads to hell.

The "chimeras dire" of ancient verse have passed away from popular belief; not so the "enchanted isles" and the "rifted rocks," whose entrance leads to perdition: the former are to be found in Scandinavian song; and, not to go farther, the volcanic mountains not inaptly support a belief in the existence of the latter. The old Danish ballad of Saint Oluf relates how the devout hero conquered the Jutt and the elves of Hornclumner, and transformed them into rocks and stones, forms which they still keep. Other instances might be given from both tale and song. That Ætna was till lately believed to be one of the entrances to Satan's realms is sufficiently intimated by a northern tradition, which relates, that on the very day and hour in which an eminent British statesman died, a traveller was startled with the vision of a coach and six galloping full speed up the burning mountain: as the pageant swept past, he heard a voice exclaim, "Ho! make way for his grace of Q——." In this way the poetic peasantry of the north avenged themselves on a nobleman, whose actions were not to their mind.—C.

[162] Ver. 520. *Within the navel.* That is, in the midst; a phrase borrowed from the Greeks and Latins.—Newton.

[163] Ver. 526. *With many murmurs mix'd.* That is, in preparing this enchanted cup, the charm of many barbarous

unintelligible words was intermixed, to quicken and strengthen its operation.—WARBURTON.

[164] Ver. 527.

The visage quite transforms of him that drinks,
And the inglorious likeness of a beast
Fixes instead.

The cup of Circe is now dry, and her enchantments are despised; nor have we any drink in traditionary belief which rivals the "pleasing poison" of the goddess. We have something almost equivalent: an ointment belongs to the fairies, which opens mortal eyes to things immortal, and shows the spirits of good and evil that watch over man. Our witches too have magic staves and magic words, which can transform a hare into a horse, or a ragwort into a pony: nay, one of them, as the legend relates, inherited a magic bridle of such wondrous powers, that when she chose to shake it over a man's head, he instantly became a steed, and an obedient one, to carry her on her midnight errands. This gifted dame had two servant lads, one lean, the other fat: on the latter upbraiding the former with the humility of his appearance, he answered,—"Lie at the bed stock, and ye will be lean too." The exchange was made: at midnight the beldame approached with her bridle; and before he could mutter an averting prayer, he was transformed into a horse, and compelled to bear her over stock and stone to an assembly of sister hags. By prayer and exertion he freed himself from the bridle, and, restored to his own shape, awaited the return of his mistress: before she was aware, he shook the bridle over her head, transformed her to a palfrey, and switched her mercilessly through "dub and mire." The adventure ended in a compromise; the witch became kindly and tolerant, and never employed the enchanted bridle on man again.—C.

[165] Ver. 530. *Character'd in the face.* So, in his 'Divorce,' b. i. pref. "A law not only written by Moses, but charactered in us by nature."—T. WARTON.

[166] Ver. 533.

He and his monstrous rout are heard to howl, &c.

Such was the practice of Comus's mother, Circe. Ovid, 'Met.' xiv. 405.

Magicis Hecaten ululatibus orat. TODD.

[167] Ver. 534. *Like stabled wolves, or tigers at their prey.* Perhaps from Virgil, 'Æn.' vii. 15, of Circe's island:—

'Hinc exaudiri gemitus, iræque leonum
—— ac formæ magnorum ululare luporum:
Quos hominum ex facie Dea sæva potentibus herbis
Induerat Circe in vultus ac terga ferarum. NEWTON.

[168] Ver. 541. *Had ta'en their supper*, &c. The supper of the sheep is from a beautiful comparison in Spenser, 'Faer. Qu' i. i. 23.

As gentle shepheard in sweete eventide,
When ruddy Phebus gins to welke in west,
High on a hill, his flocke to vewen wide,
Markes which doe byte their hasty supper best.
T. WARTON.

[169] Ver. 544. *With ivy canopied, and interwove*
With flaunting honey-suckle.

Perhaps from Shakspeare, 'Mids. Night Dr.' a. ii. s. 2.

Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine. T. WARTON.

[170] Ver. 547. *To meditate my rural minstrelsy.* Virgil, 'Bucol.' i. 2.

Sylvestrem tenui Musam meditaris avena.

So in 'Lycidas,' v. 66.

Or strictly meditate the thankless Muse. T. WARTON.

[171] Ver. 548. *But, ere a close.* A musical close on his pipe. As in Shakspeare, 'K. Rich. II.' a. ii. s. 1.

The setting sun, and music at the close;
As the last taste of sweets is sweetest last. T. WARTON.

[172] Ver. 553. *The drowsy frighted steeds*, &c. I read, according to Milton's manuscript, "drowsy-flighted:" and this genuine reading Dr. Dalton has also preserved in 'Comus.' "Drowsie frighted" is nonsense, and manifestly an error of the press in all the editions. There can be no doubt, that in this passage Milton had his eye upon the description of night, in 'K. Hen. VI.' p. ii. a. iv. s. 1.

> And now loud-howling wolves arouse the jades
> That drag the tragic melancholy night,
> Who with their drowsy, slow, and flagging wings
> Clip dead men's graves.

The idea and the expression of "drowsie-flighted" in the one, are plainly copied from their drowsy, slow, and flagging wings in the other.—NEWTON.

It must be allowed, that "drowsy-flighted" is a very harsh combination. Notwithstanding the Cambridge manuscript exhibits "drowsie-flighted," yet "drowsie frighted" without a composition, is a more rational and easy reading, and invariably occurs in the editions 1637, 1645, and 1673. That is, "the drowsy steeds of Night, who were affrighted on this occasion, at the barbarous dissonance of Comus's nocturnal revelry." Milton made the emendation after he had forgot his first idea.—T. WARTON.

[173] Ver. 554. *Close-curtain'd sleep.* Perhaps from Shakspeare, 'Macbeth,' a. ii. s. 1.

> And wicked dreams abuse
> The curtain'd sleep. THYER.

[174] Ver. 555.

At last a soft and solemn-breathing sound, &c.

Shakspeare's 'Twelfth Night,' at the beginning, has here been alleged by Mr. Thyer. The idea is strongly implied in the following lines from Jonson's 'Vision of Delight,' a Mask presented at Court in the Christmas of 1617.

Yet let it like an odour rise
To all the senses here;
And fall like sleep upon their eyes,
Or musicke in their eare.

But the thought appeared before, where it is exquisitely expressed, in Bacon's 'Essays:'—"And because the breath of flowers is farre sweeter in the aire, where it comes and goes like the warbling of musicke." Of Gardens, Ess. xlvi.—T. WARTON.

[175] Ver. 557. *That even Silence*, &c. Silence was pleased at the nightingale's song, 'Par. Lost,' b. iv. 604. The conceit in both passages is unworthy the poet.—T. WARTON.

[176] Ver. 560. *I was all ear.* So Catullus of a rich perfume, 'Carm.' xiii. 13.

Quod tu cum olfacies, Deos rogabis
Totum ut te faciant, Fabulle, nasum.

So Shakspeare, 'Winter's Tale,' a. iv. s. 3:—"All their other senses stuck in their ears:" and, in the 'Tempest,' Prospero says, "No tongues; all eyes; be silent."—T. WARTON.

[177] Ver. 561. *That might create a soul*
Under the ribs of death.

The general image of creating a soul by harmony is again from Shakspeare: but the particular one of "a soul under the ribs of death," which is extremely grotesque, is taken from a picture in Alciat's 'Emblems,' where a soul in the figure of an infant is represented within the ribs of a skeleton, as in its prison. This curious picture is presented by Quarles.—WARBURTON.

The picture alluded to is not taken from Alciat's 'Emblems,' but from Herman Hugo's 'Pia Desideria;' and is the eighth; "Suspirium animæ amantis."—TODD.

[178] Ver. 565. *Harrow'd with grief and fear.* To "harrow" is to conquer, to subdue. The word is of Saxon origin. Thus Shakspeare, 'Hamlet,' a. i. s. 1. "It harrows me with fear and wonder."—STEEVENS.

[179] Ver. 584. *Yes, and keep it still,* &c. This confidence of the Elder Brother in favour of the final efficacy of virtue, holds forth a very high strain of philosophy, delivered in as high strains of eloquence and poetry.—T. WARTON.

It exhibits the sublimer sentiments of the christian. Religion here gave energy to the poet's strains.—TODD.

[180] Ver. 597. *Self-fed, and self-consumed.* This image is wonderfully fine. It is taken from the conjectures of astronomers concerning the dark spots which from time to time appear on the surface of the sun's body, and after a while disappear again; which they suppose to be the scum of that fiery matter, which first breeds it, and then breaks through and consumes it.—WARBURTON.

[181] Ibid.

If this fail,
The pillar'd firmament is rottenness,
And earth's base built on stubble.

This is Shakspeare's thought, but in more exalted language, 'Wint. Tale,' a. ii. s. 1.

If I mistake
In those foundations which I build upon,
The centre is not big enough to bear
A schoolboy's top. STEEVENS.

[182] Ver. 604. *The sooty flag of Acheron.* Compare P. Fletcher's 'Locusts,' 1627, p. 58.

All hell run out, and sooty flagges display. TODD.

[183] Ver. 605. *Harpies and hydras,* &c. Harpies and hydras

are a combination in an enumeration of monsters, in Sylvester's 'Du Bart.' p. 206. fol.

And the ugly Gorgons, and the sphinxes fell,
Hydras and harpies, &c. T. WARTON.

184 Ver. 618. *The might of hellish charms.* Compare Shakspeare's 'King Richard III.' a. iii. s. 4.

With devilish plots
Of damned witchcraft; and that have prevail'd
Upon my body with their hellish charms. T. WARTON.

185 Ver. 614.

He with his bare wand can unthread thy joints,
And crumble all thy sinews.

So, in Prospero's commands to Ariel, 'Tempest,' a. iv. s. ult.

Go, charge my goblins, that they grind their joints
With dry convulsions, shorten up their sinews
With aged cramps. T. WARTON.

185 Ver. 633.

Bore a bright golden flower, but not in this soil:
Unknown, and like esteem'd, &c.

Doctor Newton says, that "redundant verses sometimes occur in Milton." True: but the redundant syllable is never, I think, found in the second, third, or fourth foot. His instance of v. 605, in this poem,

Harpies and hydras, or all the monstrous forms—

where the redundancy is in the third foot, and forms an anapest, does not prove his point. The passage before us is certainly corrupt, or, at least, inaccurate; and had better, I think, been given thus:—

But in another country, as he said,
Bore a bright golden flower, not in this soil
Unknown, though light esteem'd. HURD.

Seward proposed to read,

but in this soil
Unknown and light esteem'd.

The emendation is very plausible and ingenious. But to say nothing of the editions under Milton's own inspection, I must object, that, if an argument be here drawn for the alteration from roughness or redundancy of verse, innumerable instances of the kind occur in our author. Milton, notwithstanding his singular skill in music, appears to have had a very bad ear; and it is hard to say on what principle he modulated his lines.—T. Warton.

By another accomplished writer the passage before us is considered as one of those licenses, which are not disagreeable in dramatic, although they would certainly displease in heroic verse:—

Bore a | bright gol | den flower, | but not in | this soil.

See Mitford's 'Essay upon the Harmony of Language,' first ed. p. 129. To the remark on "Milton's ear," the niceness of which more conspicuously displays itself in 'Comus,' the following observation, or general rule, may be safely opposed:—"There is no kind or degree of harmony, of which our language is capable, which may not be found in numberless instances in Milton's writings; the excellency of whose ear seems to have been equal to that of his imagination and learning." See Foster's 'Essay on Accent,' second ed. p. 67.—Todd.

I am astonished at Warton's observation, that Milton had a very bad ear. The line ought to be scanned thus:—

Bŏre ă brĭght | gōldĕn | flōwer, bŭt | nŏt ĭn | thĭs sōil.

[187] Ver. 635. *Clouted shoon.* See 'Cymbeline,' a. iv. s. 2:—

I thought he slept, and put
My clouted brogues from off my feet, whose rudeness
Answer'd my steps too loud.

Clouts are thin and narrow plates of iron affixed with hob-nails to the soles of the shoes of rustics. These made too much noise. The word "brogues" is still used for shoes among the peasantry of Ireland.—T. WARTON.

The expression occurs in the present version of our Bible, Joshua ix. 5.—TODD.

[188] Ver. 636.

And yet more med'cinal is it than that moly, &c.

Drayton introduces a shepherd "his sundry simples sorting," who, among other rare plants, produces moly, 'Mus. Elys. Nymph.' v. vol. iv. p. 1489:—

> Here is my moly of much fame,
> In magics often used.

It is not agreed, whether Milton's hæmony is a real or poetical plant.—T. WARTON.

[189] Ver. 641. *Or ghastly furies' apparition.* Peck supposes, that the furies were never believed to appear, and proposes to read "fairies' apparition:" but Milton means any frightful appearance raised by magic. Among the spectres which surrounded our Saviour in the wilderness, and which the fiend had raised, are furies, 'Par. Reg.' b. iv. 422.—T. WARTON.

[190] Ver. 642. *I pursed it up.* It was customary in families to have herbs in store, not only for medical and culinary, but for superstitious purposes. In some houses rue and rosemary were constantly kept for good luck. Among the plants to which preternatural qualities were ascribed, Perdita in the 'Winter's Tale' mentions rue as the herb of grace, and rosemary as the emblem of remembrance, a. iv. s. 3.—T. WARTON.

[191] Ver. 647. *If you have this about you*, &c. The notion

of facing danger, and conquering an enemy by carrying a charm, which was often a herb, is not uncommon in romance. Hence in 'Samson Agon.' v. 1130, &c. and v. 1149, Milton's idea is immediately and particularly taken from the ritual of the combat in chivalry. When two champions entered the lists, each took an oath that he had no charm, herb, or any enchantment about him: and I think it is clear, that Milton, in furnishing the Elder Brother with the plant hæmony, notwithstanding the idea is originally founded in Homer's moly, when like a knight he is to attack the necromancer Comus, and even to assail his hall, alluded to the charming herb of the romantic combat.—T. WARTON.

[192] Ver. 651. *And brandish'd blade, rush on him.* Thus Ulysses assaults Circe, offering her cup, with a drawn sword, Ovid, 'Metam.' xiii. 293:—

Intrat
Ille domum Circes, et, ad insidiosa vocatus
Pocula, conantem virga mulcere capillos
Reppulit, et stricto pavidam deterruit ense.

See Homer, 'Odyss.' x. 294. 321.—T. WARTON.

Our romances supply us with numerous instances of sorcerers and wizards being vanquished and foiled by the daring hardihood of heroes and warriors. In the poetic ballad of Tamlane, a young nobleman is stolen by the fairies, and brought up as a page to their queen, at whose bridle rein he is represented as constantly riding. In one of his excursions he contrived to make his mistress acquainted with his situation, and gave her instructions how to win him back. The adventure required courage, but not more than the lady possessed: she waylaid the fairy procession, seized her lover, and held him fast, though he became successively fire, water, red-hot iron, and a roaring lion in her hands. When all the fairy wiles were exhausted,

he was restored to his natural shape, and the gratified damsel held in her arms

A mother-naked man.

A young man, the only son of a clergyman on the Border, suddenly disappeared within these forty years, and the rumour ran that he was seized as he passed one of the mountain streams, and carried off by the fairies. It is said that he appeared afterwards to his only sister, told her he was the fairy queen's paramour, that he would ride on next Hallowmass-eve through a neighbouring glen, and entreated her to waylay and win him as Janet won young Tamlane. She promised; but when the fairy procession approached, she was so daunted by the wild music and the elfin chivalry, that she made but a weak attempt, and her brother was hurried off weeping to Elfland amid the laughter of his companions.—C.

[193] Ver. 651. *Break his glass,*
And shed the luscious liquour on the ground.

Our author has here a double imitation of Spenser's 'Faerie Queene,' which has not been observed or distinguished. The obvious one is from Sir Guyon spilling the bowl of Pleasure's porter, ii. xii. 49: but he also copies Spenser, and more closely, where Sir Guyon breaks the golden cup of the enchantress Excesse, ii. xii. 57.—T. Warton.

[194] Ver. 653. *He and his cursed crew.* This is an allusion to Alcina's monsters, "a brutish cursed crew," Harington's 'Orlando Furioso,' b. vi. st. 61.—Todd.

[195] Ver. 655. *Or like the sons of Vulcan vomit smoke.* Alluding to Cacus. Virgil, 'Æn.' viii. 252:—

Faucibus ingentem fumum, mirabile dictu,
Evomit. Todd.

[196] Ver. 658.

And some good angel bear a shield before us!

From the divinities of the classics and of romance, we are now got to the theology of Thomas Aquinas. Our author has nobly dilated this idea of a guardian-angel, yet not without some particular and express warrant from Scripture, which he has also poetically heightened, in 'Samson Agonistes,' v. 1431, &c.—T. WARTON.

Had not Milton here also Tasso in mind? See 'Gier. Lib.' c. vii. 72. viii. 84.—DUNSTER.

[197] Ver. 659.

Nay, Lady, sit; if I but wave this wand,
Your nerves are all chain'd up in alabaster.

It is with the same magic, and in the same mode, that Prospero threatens Ferdinand, in the 'Tempest,' for pretending to resist, a. i. s. 2 :—

Come from thy ward;
For I can here disarm thee with this stick.—
Come on, obey.————Else,
Thy nerves are in their infancy again,
And have no vigour in them.

Milton here comments upon Shakspeare.—T. WARTON.

[198] Ver. 661. *Or, as Daphne was*, &c. The poet, instead of saying "root-bound, as Daphne was that fled Apollo," throws in "root-bound" into the middle betwixt the antecedent and the relative; a trajection altogether unusual in our language, but which must be allowed both to vary and raise the style; and, as the connexion is not so remote as to make the language obscure, I think it may not only be tolerated, but praised. This way of varying the style is a figure very usual both in Greek and Latin.—LORD MONBODDO.

[199] Ver. 663.

Thou canst not touch the freedom of my mind, &c.

A fine philosophical sentiment. Compare Cicero, 'De Fin.' lib. iii. ad fin:—"Recte invictus, cujus etiam si corpus constringatur, animo tamen vincula injici nulla possunt."—TODD.

[200] Ver. 668. *Here be all the pleasures,*
That fancy can beget on youthful thoughts, &c.

An echo to Fletcher's 'Faithful Shepherdess,' a. i. s. 1:—

Here be woods as green
As any, &c.
Here be all new delights, &c. T. WARTON.

This is a thought of Shakspeare's, but vastly improved by our poet in the manner of expressing it, 'Romeo and Juliet,' a. i. s. 2:—

Such comfort as do lusty young men feel,
When well-apparel'd April on the heel
Of limping winter treads. THYER.

[201] Ver. 675. *Not that Nepenthes.* The author of the lively and learned 'Inquiry into the Life and Writings of Homer,' has brought together many particulars of this celebrated drug, and concludes, p. 135:—"It is true, they use opiates for pleasure all over the Levant; but, by the best accounts of them, they had them originally from Egypt; and this of Helen appears plainly to be a production of that country, and a custom which can be traced from Homer to Augustus's reign, and from thence to the age preceding our own."—JOS. WARTON.

[202] Ver. 680. *Which Nature lent.* So Shakspeare, Sonnet iv.:—

Nature's bequest gives nothing, but doth lend;
And, being frank, she lends to those are free.

Then, beauteous niggard, why dost thou abuse
The bounteous largess given thee to give?

STEEVENS.

[203] Ver. 694. *What grim aspects are these?* So Drayton, 'Polyolb.' s. xxvii. vol. iii. p. 1190:—

Her grim aspect to see.

And Spenser, 'Faer. Qu.' v. ix. 48:—

—— with griesly grim aspect
Abhorred Murder. T. WARTON.

[204] Ver. 696.

Hence with thy brew'd enchantments, foul deceiver!

Magical potions, brewed or compounded of incantatory herbs and poisonous drugs. Shakspeare's caldron is a "brewed enchantment," but of another kind.—T. WARTON.

[205] Ver. 702. *None*

But such as are good men, can give good things.

This noble sentiment Milton has borrowed from Euripides, 'Medea,' v. 618.—NEWTON.

[206] Ver. 704.

And that which is not good, is not delicious
To a well-govern'd and wise appetite.

That is, an appetite in subjection to the rational part, and which is pleased with nothing but what reason approves of: it is a noble sentiment, but expressed in a manner which will appear flat and insipid to those who admire the present fashionable style, far removed from the simplicity of the ancients. Milton was not only the greatest scholar and finest writer of his age, but a good philosopher.—LORD MONBODDO.

[207] Ver. 707. *To those budge doctors of the Stoick fur.* Those morose and rigid teachers of abstinence and mortifi-

cation, who wear the gown of the Stoic philosophy. "Budge" is fur, anciently an ornament of the scholastic habit. In the more ancient colleges of our universities, the annual expenses for furring the robes or liveries of the fellows, appear to have been very considerable. "The Stoick fur" is as much as if he had said "The Stoick sect." But he explains the obsolete word, in which there is a tincture of ridicule, by a very awkward tautology.—T. WARTON.

[208] Ver. 719. *She hutch'd.* That is, hoarded. "Hutch" is an old word, still in use, for coffer.—T. WARTON.

[209] Ver. 727. *And live like Nature's bastards, not her sons.* The expression is taken from Heb. xii. 8. "Then are ye bastards, and not sons."—NEWTON.

[210] Ver. 730. *The wing'd air dark'd with plumes.* The image is taken from what the ancients said of the air of the northern islands, that it was clogged and darkened with feathers.—WARBURTON.

[211] Ver. 731. *The herds,* &c. Mr. Bowle observes, that the tenor of Comus's argument is much the same with that of Clarinda, in Beaumont and Fletcher's 'Sea-Voyage,' a. ii. s. 1:—

> Should all women use this obstinate abstinence,
> You would force upon us;
> In a few years the whole world would be peopled
> Only with beasts. T. WARTON.

[212] Ver. 732. *The sea o'erfraught would swell,* &c. Dr. Warburton and Dr. Newton remark, that this and the four following lines are exceedingly childish. Perhaps they are not inconsistent with the character of the wily speaker; and might be intended to expose that ostentatious sophistry, by which a bad cause is generally supported.—TODD.

[213] Ver. 734. *And so bestud with stars.* So Drayton, in his most elegant epistle from King John to Matilda, which our author, as we shall see, has more largely copied in the remainder of Comus's speech, vol. i. p. 232, of heaven :—

> Would she put on her star-bestudded crown.
>
> T. WARTON.

[214] Ver. 743.

If you let slip time, like a neglected rose,
It withers on the stalk with languish'd head.

See 'Midsummer Night's Dream,' a. i. s. 1 :—

> But earthlier happy is the rose distill'd,
> Than that, which, withering on the virgin thorn,
> Grows, lives, and dies, in single blessedness.
>
> T. WARTON.

[215] Ver. 745.

Beauty is Nature's brag, and must be shown
In courts, &c.

See Fletcher, 'Faith. Shep.' a. i. s. 1. "Give not yourself to loneness," &c. But this argument is pursued more at large in Drayton's Epistle above quoted.—T. WARTON.

[216] Ver. 748. *It is for homely features to keep home.* The same turn and manner of expression is in the 'Two Gent. of Verona,' at the beginning :—

> Home-keeping youth have ever homely wits.
>
> NEWTON.

[217] Ver. 753. *Love-darting eyes.* So, in Sylvester's 'Du Bart.' ed. fol. p. 399 :—

> Whoso beholds her sweet love-darting eyn.
>
> T. WARTON.

[218] Ver. 755. *You are but young yet* This was too personal. Lady Alice Egerton, who acted the part, was about twelve: she here sustained a feigned character, which the poet overlooked. He too plainly adverts to her age. Particularities, where no compliment was implied, should have been avoided.—T. WARTON.

[219] Ver. 760. *I hate when Vice can bolt her arguments.* In the construction of a mill, a part of the machine is called the boulting-mill, which separates the flour from the bran. The meaning of the whole context is this, "I am offended when Vice pretends to dispute and reason, for it always uses sophistry."—T. WARTON.

[220] Ver. 767. *Sparè temperance.* 'Il. Pens.' v. 46:—

Spare Fast, that oft with gods doth diet. T. WARTON.

[221] Ver. 769. *A moderate and beseeming share.* So, in his "Prose Works,' i. 161. ed. 1698. "We cannot therefore do better than to leave this care of ours to God: he can easily send labourers into his harvest, that shall not cry, give, give, but be contented with a moderate and beseeming allowance."—TODD.

[222] Ver. 784. *Thou hast nor ear, nor soul,* &c. See before, v. 453, &c. By studying the reveries of the Platonic writers, Milton contracted a theory concerning chastity and the purity of love, in the contemplation of which, like other visionaries, he indulged his imagination with ideal refinements, and with pleasing but unmeaning notions of excellence and perfection.—T. WARTON.

[223] Ver. 785. *The sublime notion, and high mystery,* &c. Thus, in his 'Smectymnuus,' speaking of chastity:—"Having had the doctrine of Holy Scripture, unfolding those chaste and high mysteries, with timeliest care infused,

that the body is for the Lord, and the Lord for the body." Todd.

[224] Ver. 790. *Gay rhetorick.* See Beaumont and Fletcher's 'Philaster,' a. iv. s. 1. "I know not your rhetorick; but I can lay it on."—T. Warton.

[225] Ver. 791. *Her dazzling fence.* We have the substantive "fence" in Shakspeare, 'Much Ado about Noth.' a. v. s. 1. "Despight his nice fence," &c.—T. Warton.

[226] Ver. 797. *And the brute Earth would lend her nerves.* The unfeeling Earth would sympathize and assist. It is Horace's "bruta tellus," Od. i. xxxiv. 9.—T. Warton.

[227] Ver. 799. *Were shatter'd,* &c. In G. Fletcher's 'Christ's Vict.' the sorceresse sings a song, the subject of which is, Love "obtruding false rules prank'd in reason's garb," and endeavours to captivate our Saviour in the same manner as Comus does the Lady.—Headley.

[228] Ver. 800. These six lines are aside, but I would point the first thus: "She fables not, I feel that;" that is, I feel that she does not fable, &c.—Sympson.

[229] Ver. 802. *And though not mortal,* &c. Her words are assisted by somewhat divine; and I, although immortal, and above the race of man, am so affected with their force, that a cold shuddering dew, &c. Here is the noblest panegyric on the power of virtue, adorned with the sublimest imagery. It is extorted from the mouth of a magician and a preternatural being, who, although actually possessed of his prey, feels all the terrors of human nature at the bold rebuke of innocence, and shudders with a sudden cold sweat like a guilty man.—T. Warton.

[230] Ver. 808. *Against the canon-laws of our foundation.* "Canon-laws," a joke!—WARBURTON.

Here is a ridicule on establishments, and the canon-law now greatly encouraged by the church. Perhaps on the canons of the church, now rigidly enforced, and at which Milton frequently glances in his prose tracts.—T. WARTON.

[231] Ver. 809. *Yet 'tis but the lees.* I like the manuscript reading best,—

This is mere moral stuff, the very lees.

"Yet" is bad: "But" very inaccurate.—HURD.

"Yet" is omitted both by Tickell and Fenton.—TODD.

[232] Ver. 815.

O, ye mistook; ye should have snatch'd his wand, &c.

They are directed before to seize Comus's wand, v. 653: and this was from the 'Faerie Queene,' where Sir Guyon breaks the charming staff of Pleasure's porter, as he likewise overthrows his bowl, ii. xii. 49. But from what particular process of disenchantment, ancient or modern, did Milton take the notion of reversing Comus's wand or rod? It was from a passage of Ovid, the great ritualist of classical sorcery, before cited, where the companions of Ulysses are restored to their human shapes, 'Metam.' xiv. 300.

Percutimurque caput conversæ verbere virgæ,
Verbaque dicuntur dictis contraria verbis.

The circumstance in the text, of the Brothers forgetting to seize and reverse the magician's rod, while by contrast it heightens the superior intelligence of the Attendant Spirit, affords the opportunity of introducing the fiction of raising Sabrina; which, exclusive of its poetical ornaments, is recommended by a local propriety, and was peculiarly interesting to the audience, as the Severn is the famous river of the neighbourhood.—T. WARTON.

[233] Ver. 821. *Some other means*, &c. Dr. Johnson reprobates this "long narration," as he styles it, about Sabrina; which, he says, "is of no use because it is false, and therefore unsuitable to a good being." By the [illegible] this fiction is considered as true. In common sense, the relator is not true: and why may not an imaginary being, even of a good character, deliver an imaginary tale? Where is the moral impropriety of an innocent invention, especially when introduced for a virtuous purpose? In poetry false narrations are often more useful than true. Something, and something preternatural, and consequently false, but therefore more poetical, was necessary for the present distress.—T. Warton.

[234] Ver. 823. *The soothest*. The truest, faithfullest. "Sooth" is truth; "in sooth" is indeed: and therefore what this soothest shepherd teaches may be depended upon. —Newton.

[235] Ibid. *That e'er piped on plains*. Spenser thus characterises Hobbinol, as Mr. Bowle observes, in 'Colin Clout 's come home again:'—

A iolly groome was hee,
As euer piped on an oaten reed. T. Warton.

[236] Ver. 824.

There is a gentle nymph not far from hence, &c.

The part of the fable of 'Comus,' which may be called the disenchantment, is evidently founded on Fletcher's 'Faithful Shepherdess.' The moral of both dramas is the triumph of chastity. This in both is finely brought about by the same sort of machinery.—T. Warton.

[237] Ver. 837. *Imbathe*. The word "imbathe" occurs in our author's 'Reformation:'—"Methinks a sovran and reviving joy must needs rush into the bosom of him that reads or hears; and the sweet odour of the returning gospel im-

[illegible] the fragrance of Heaven." What was [illegible] of the puritanical writers, was poetry [illegible]. —T. WARTON.

[illegible] Ver. 836. *In nectar'd lavers.* This, at least, reminds us of Alcæus's epigram or epitaph on Homer, who died in the island of Io. The Nereids of the circumambient sea bathed his dead body with nectar. The process which follows, of dropping ambrosial oils "into the porch and inlet of each sense" of the drowned Sabrina, is originally from Homer, where Venus anoints the dead body of Patroclus with rosy ambrosial oil, 'Il.' xxiii. 186.—T. WARTON.

[239] Ver. 839. *And through the porch.* The same metaphor in 'Hamlet,' a. i. s. 8.

> And in the porches of mine ear did pour
> The leperous distilment. NEWTON.

[240] Ver. 841. *And underwent a quick immortal change.* So in the 'Tempest,' a. i. s. 2.

> Nothing of him that doth fade,
> But doth suffer a sea-change. STEEVENS.

[241] Ver. 844.

Visits the herds along the twilight meadows, &c.

The virgin shepherdess Clorin, in Fletcher's pastoral play, so frequently quoted, possesses the skill of Sabrina, a. i. s. 1. —T. WARTON.

[242] Ver. 845. *Helping all urchin blasts.* The urchin, or hedge-hog, from its solitariness, the ugliness of its appearance, and from a popular opinion that it sucked or poisoned the udders of cows, was adopted into the demonologic system; and its shape was sometimes supposed to be

assumed by mischievous elves. Hence it was one of the plagues of Caliban in the 'Tempest,' a. ii. s. 2.

His spirits hear me,
And yet I needs must curse: but they 'll not pinch,
Fright me with urchin-shows, pitch me in the mire, &c.
T. WARTON.

[243] Ver. 850.

And throw sweet garland wreaths into her stream.

Beaumont and Fletcher exhibit a passage immediately to the purport of the text, 'False One,' a. iii. s. 3.

With incense let us bless the brim;
And as the wanton fishes swim,
Let us gums and garlands fling, &c. T. WARTON.

[244] Ver. 852. *She can unlock*
The clasping charm, and thaw the numming spell.

This notion of the wisdom or skill of Sabrina, is in Drayton, 'Polyolb.' s. v. vol. ii. p. 753.—T. WARTON.

[245] Ver. 856. *To aid a virgin, such as was herself.* Alluding perhaps to the Danaids' invocation of Pallas, wherein they use the same argument, Æschyl. 'Supp.' v. 155.—THYER.

[246] Ver. 862. *In twisted braids of lilies.* We are to understand water-lilies, with which Drayton often braids the tresses of his water-nymphs, in the 'Polyolbion.'—T. WARTON.

[247] Ver. 863. *The loose train of thy amber-dropping hair.* We have "an amber cloud" above, v. 333. And, in 'L'Allegro,' "the sun is robed in flames and amber light," v. 61. But liquid amber is a yellow pellucid gum. Sabrina's hair drops amber, because in the poet's idea, her stream was supposed to be transparent; as the river of bliss in 'Paradise Lost,' b. iii. 358; and Choaspes has

an "amber stream," 'Paradise Regained,' b. iii. 288. But Choaspes was called the "golden water." Amber, when applied to water, means a luminous clearness; when to hair, bright yellow.—T. WARTON.

A curious passage in Nash's 'Terrors of the Night,' 1594, will minutely illustrate the "amber-dropping hair" of Sabrina: Nash is describing a "troupe of naked virgins. Their haire they ware loose vnrowled about their shoulders, whose dangling amber trammells, reaching downe beneath their knees, seemed to drop baulme on their delicious bodies."—TODD.

[248] Ver. 868. *In name of great Oceanus.* It will be curious to observe how the poet has distinguished the sea-deities by the epithets and attributes, which are assigned to each of them in the best classic authors; "Great Oceanus," as in Hesiod, 'Theog.' 20. *Ὠκεανόν τε μέγαν.*—NEWTON.

[249] Ver. 869. *By the earth-shaking Neptune's mace,* &c. Neptune is usually called "earth-shaking" in 'Il.' xii. 27. xx. 13. Tethys the wife of Oceanus, and mother of the gods, may well be supposed to have "a grave majestick pace:" Hesiod calls her "the venerable Tethys," 'Theog.' 368. Milton had before called Nereus, at v. 835, "aged," as in Virgil, 'Georg.' iv. 392, "grandævus Nereus:" he may be called "hoary" too upon another account:—"Fere omnes Dii marini senes sunt, albent enim eorum capita spumis aquarum." Servius, in 'Georg.' iv. 403:—"The Carpathian wisard" is Proteus, who had a cave at Carpathus, an island in the Mediterranean, and was a wisard or prophet, as also Neptune's shepherd; and as such bore a hook. See Virgil, 'Georg.' iv. 387.—NEWTON.

And Ovid, 'Met.' xi. 249:—"Carpathius vates."—TODD.

[250] Ver. 873. *Triton's winding shell,* &c. Triton was

Neptune's trumpeter, and was "scaly," as all these surgical creatures are:—"squamis modo hispido corpore, etiam qua humanam effigiem habent." Plin. lib. ix. sect. iv. His "winding shell" is particularly described in Ovid, 'Met.' i. 333. Glaucus was an excellent fisher or diver, and so was feigned to be a sea-god. Aristotle writes that he prophesied to the gods, and Nicander says that Apollo himself learned the art of prediction from Glaucus. See Athenæus, lib. vii. cap. 12. And Euripides, 'Orest.' 363, calls him the seaman's prophet, and interpreter of Nereus; and Apollon. Rhodius, 'Argonaut.' 1310. gives him the same appellation. Ino, flying from the rage of her husband Athamas who was furiously mad, threw herself from the top of a rock into the sea, with her son Melicerta in her arms. Neptune, at the intercession of Venus, changed them into sea-deities, and gave them new names; Leucothea to her, and to him Palæmon. See Ovid, 'Met.' iv. 538. She, being Leucothea, or the white goddess, may well be supposed to have "lovely hands," which I presume the poet mentions in opposition to Thetis' feet: and her son "rules the strands," having the command of the ports, and therefore called in Latin *Portumnus*. See Ovid, 'Fast.' vi. 545.—NEWTON.

[251] Ver. 877. *Tinsel-slipper'd feet.* The poet meant this as a paraphrase of "silver-footed," the usual epithet of Thetis in Homer.—NEWTON.

[252] Ver. 878. *Sirens sweet*, &c. The sirens are introduced here, as being sea nymphs, and singing upon the coast.—NEWTON.

[253] Ver. 879, 880. Parthenope and Ligea were two of the sirens. Parthenope's tomb was at Naples, which was therefore called Parthenope. Plin. lib. iii. sect. ix. Silius Ital. xii. 83. Ligea is also the name of a sea-nymph in

Virgil, 'Georg.' iv. 336; and the poet draws her in the attitude in which mermaids are represented. See Ovid, 'Met.' iv. 310, of Salmacis.—NEWTON.

One of the employments of the nymph Salmacis in Ovid, is to comb her hair; but that fiction is here heightened with the brilliancy of romance. Ligea's comb is of gold, and she sits on diamond rocks. These were new allurements for the unwary.—T. WARTON.

[254] Ver. 889. *Listen, and save!* The repetition of the prayer, ver. 866 and 889, in the invocation of Sabrina, is similar to that of Æschylus's Chorus in the invocation of Darius's shade, 'Persæ,' ver. 666 and 674.—THYER.

Thus Amaryllis, in the 'Faithful Shepherdess,' invokes the priest of Pan to protect her from the sullen shepherd, a. v. s. 1. p. 184.—T. WARTON.

[255] Ver. 890. *By the rushy-fringed bank.* See 'Paradise Lost,' b. iv. 262:—"The fringed bank with myrtle crown'd."—T. WARTON.

[256] Ver. 891.

Where grows the willow, and the osier dank.

See the 'Faithful Shepherdess,' a. iii. s. 1. p. 153.—T. WARTON.

[257] Ver. 892.

My sliding chariot stays,
Thick set with agate, &c.

See Drayton, 'Polyolb.' s. v. vol. ii. p. 752.—T. WARTON.

[258] Ver. 893. *The azure sheen.* "Sheen" is again used as a substantive for brightness, in this poem, ver. 1003.—TODD.

[259] Ver. 897. *Printless feet.* So Prospero to his elves, but in a style of much higher and wilder fiction, 'Temp. a. v. s. 1:—

> And ye that on the sands with printless foot
> Do chase the ebbing Neptune, and do fly him
> When he comes back. T. WARTON.

[260] Ver. 898. *Velvet head.* In the 'Faithful Shepherdess,' a. ii. s. 1:—"The dew-drops hang on the velvet-heads" of flowers.—TODD.

[261] Ver. 899. *That bends not as I tread.* See 'England's Helicon,' ed. 1614, by W. H.:—

> Where she doth walke,
> Scarce she doth the primerose head
> Depresse, or tender stalke
> Of blew-vein'd violets,
> Whereon her foot she sets. T. WARTON.

[262] Ver. 910. *Brightest Lady, look on me.* In the manuscript, *virtuous*: but "brightest" is an epithet thus applied in the 'Faithful Shepherdess.'—T. WARTON.

[263] Ver. 912. *Drops, that from my fountain pure*
I have kept, of precious cure.

Calton proposed to read *ure*, that is, use. The word, it must be owned, was not uncommon: but the rhymes of many couplets in the 'Faithful Shepherdess,' relating to the same business, and ending "pure" and "cure," show that *cure* was Milton's word.—T. WARTON.

[264] Ver. 914. *Thrice upon thy finger's tip*, &c. Compare Shakspeare, 'Mids. Night's Dream,' a. ii. s. 6. But Milton, in most of the circumstances of dissolving this charm, is apparently to be traced in the 'Faithful Shepherdess.'—T. WARTON.

[265] Ver. 915. *Thy rubied lip.* So, in Browne's 'Brit. Past.' b. ii. s. iii. p. 78:—

The melting rubyes on her cherry lip. TODD.

[266] Ver. 918.

I touch with chaste palms moist and cold:—
Now the spell hath lost his hold.

Compare Fletcher's 'Faithful Shepherdess,' a. v. s. 1; a. iii. s. 1.—T. WARTON.

The chaste hands also of Britomart, the flowre of chastity, 'Faer. Qu.' iii. xi. 6. were not here forgotten by Milton.—TODD.

[267] Ver. 921. *To wait in Amphitrite's bower.* Drayton's Sabrina is arrayed in

a watchet weed, with many a curious wave,
Which as a princely gift great Amphitrite gave.

'Polyolb.' s. v. vol. ii. p. 752. And we have "Amphitrite's bower," ibid. s. xxviii. v. iii. p. 1193.—T. WARTON.

[268] Ver. 923. *Sprung of old Anchises' line.* For Locrine was the son of Brutus, who was the son of Silvius, Silvius of Ascanius, Ascanius of Æneas, Æneas of Anchises. See Milton's 'History of England,' b. i.—NEWTON.

[269] Ver. 925. *Their full tribute never miss,* &c. The torrents from the Welsh mountains sometimes raise the Severn on a sudden to a prodigious height: but at the same time they "fill her molten crystal with mud:" her stream, which of itself is clear, is then discoloured and muddy. The poet adverts to the known natural properties of the river.—T. WARTON.

[270] Ver. 932. *May thy billows roll ashore*
The beryl and the golden ore.

This is reasonable as a wish; but jewels were surely out of place among the decorations of Sabrina's chamber, on the supposition that they were the natural productions of her stream. The wish is equally ideal and imaginary, that her banks should be covered with groves of myrrh and cinnamon. A wish, conformable to the real state of things, to English seasons and English fertility, would have been more pleasing, as less unnatural: yet we must not too severely try poetry by truth and reality.—T. WARTON.

[271] Ver. 934. *May thy lofty head be crown'd,* &c. This votive address of gratitude to Sabrina was suggested to our author by that of Amoret to the river-god in Fletcher's 'Faithful Shepherdess,' a. iii. s. 1.—T. WARTON.

[272] Ver. 935. *With many a tower,* &c. Mr. Warton thinks that Windsor Castle suggested this description. Milton was thinking rather of Spenser.—TODD.

[273] Ver. 936. *And here and there thy banks upon*
With groves of myrrh and cinnamon.

The construction of these two lines is a little difficult: to crown her head with towers is true imagery; but to crown her head upon her banks will scarcely be allowed to be so. I would therefore put a colon instead of a comma at v. 935, and then read

> And here and there thy banks upon
> Be groves of myrrh and cinnamon. SEWARD.

In v. 936, "banks" is the nominative case, as "head" was in the last verse but one. The sense and syntax of the whole is, May thy head be crown'd round about with towers and terraces, and here and there may thy banks be crowned upon with groves, &c. The phrase is Greek.—CALTON.

[illegible] Ver. 950. *The stars grow high,*
But night's sceptr'd monarch yet in the mid sky.
Compare Fletcher's play, a. ii. s. 1.—T. WARTON.

[illegible] Ver. 960. *Here be, without duck or nod,* &c. By "ducks and nods" our author alludes to the country people's awkward way of dancing: and, the two Brothers and the Lady being now to dance, he describes their elegant way of moving by "trippings," "lighter toes," "court guise," &c. He follows Shakspeare, who makes Ariel tell Prospero, that his maskers,

> Before you can say, come and go,
> And breathe twice, and cry so, so,
> Each one, tripping on his toe,
> Will be here with mop and mow.

And Oberon commands his fairies:—

> Every elfe, and fairy sprite,
> Hop as light as bird from briar,
> And this ditty after me
> Sing, and dance it trippingly.

The Dryads were wood-nymphs: but here the ladies who appeared on this occasion at the court of the lord president of the marches, are very elegantly termed Dryades. Indeed the prophet complains of the Jewish women for mincing as they go, Isaiah iii. 16. But our author uses that word, only to express the neatness of their gait.—PECK.

[276] Ver. 976. *To the ocean now I fly,* &c. This speech is evidently a paraphrase on Ariel's song in the 'Tempest,' a. v. s. 1:—

> Where the bee sucks, there suck I. WARBURTON.

[277] Ver. 979. *Up in the broad fields of the sky.* It may be doubted whether from Virgil, "Aeris in campis latis,"

Æn. vi. 888. for at first he had written "plain fields," with another idea; a level extent of verdure.—T. Warton.

He wrote "broad fields" from Fairfax, b. viii. st. 57. "O'er the broad fields of heauens bright wildernesse."—Todd.

[278] Ver. 980. *There I suck the liquid air.* Thus Ubaldo, in Fairfax's 'Tasso,' a good wisard, who dwells in the centre of the earth, but sometimes emerges, to breathe the purer air of Mount Carmel, b. xiv. st. 43;—

And there in liquid ayre myself disport. T. Warton.

[279] Ver. 981. *All amidst the gardens fair*
Of Hesperus, and his daughters three.

The daughters of Hesperus, the brother of Atlas, first mentioned in Milton's manuscript as their father, had gardens or orchards which produced apples of gold. Spenser makes them the daughters of Atlas, 'Faer. Qu.' ii. vii. 54. See Ovid, 'Metam.' ix. 636: and Apollodor. 'Bibl.' l. ii. § 11. But what ancient fabler celebrates these damsels for their skill in singing? Apollonius Rhodius, an author whom Milton taught to his scholars, 'Argon.' iv. 1396. Hence Lucan's virgin-choir, overlooked by the commentators, is to be explained, where he speaks of this golden grove, ix. 360:—

fuit aurea silva,
Divitiisque graves et fulvo germine rami;
Virgineusque chorus, nitidi custodia luci,
Et nunquam somno damnatus lumina serpens, &c.

Milton frequently alludes to these ladies, or their gardens, 'Par. Lost,' b. iii. 568. iv. 520. viii. 631. 'Par. Reg.' b. ii. 357. And the Mask before us, v. 392.—T. Warton.

[280] Ver. 983. *The golden tree.* Many say that the apples of Atlas's garden were of gold: Ovid is the only ancient

writer that says the trees were of gold, 'Metam.' iv. 636.—T. Warton.

[281] Ver. 993. "Blow" is here actively used, as in Beaumont and Fletcher's 'Lover's Progress,' a. ii. s. 1:—

The wind that blows the April-flowers not softer.

That is, "makes the flowers blow." So, in Jonson's 'Mask at Highgate,' 1604:—

For these, Favonius here shall blow
New flowers, &c. T. Warton.

[282] Ver. 996. *And drenches with Elysian dew.* As in 'Par. Lost,' b. xi. 367. the angel says to Adam,

Let Eve, for I have drench'd her eyes,
Here sleep below. T. Warton.

[283] Ver. 997. *If your ears be true.* Intimating that this song, which follows, of Adonis, and Cupid and Psyche, is not for the profane, but only for well-purged ears.—Hurd.

[284] Ver. 1001. See Spenser's 'Astrophel,' st. 48.—T. Warton.

[285] Ver. 1002. *The Assyrian queen.* Venus is called "the Assyrian queen," because she was first worshipped by the Assyrians. See Pausanias, 'Attic.' lib. i. cap. xiv.—Newton.

[286] Ver. 1003. *In spangled sheen.* 'Mids. N. Dream,' a. ii. s. 1:—

By fountain clear, or spangled starlight sheen. Todd.

[287] Ver. 1011. Undoubtedly Milton's allusion at large, is here to Spenser's allegorical garden of Adonis, 'Faer.

Qu.' iii. vi. 46, seq. but at the same time, his mythology has a reference to Spenser's 'Hymne of Love,' where Love is feign'd to dwell "in a paradise of all delight," with Hebe, or Youth, and the rest of the darlings of Venus, who sport with his daughter Pleasure.—T. WARTON.

[288] Ver. 1012. *But now my task is smoothly done*, &c. So Shakspeare's Prospero, in the Epilogue to the 'Tempest:'—

Now my charms are all o'erthrown, &c.

And thus the satyr, in Fletcher's 'Faithful Shepherdess,' who bears the character of our Attendant Spirit, when his office or commission is finished, displays his power and activity, promising any farther services, s. ult.—T. WARTON.

[289] Ver. 1014. *The green earth's end.* Cape de Verd isles.—SYMPSON.

[290] Ver. 1015. *Where the bow'd welkin slow doth bend.* A curve which bends, or descends slowly, from its great sweep. "Bending" has the same sense, of Dover cliff, in 'K. Lear,' a. iv. s. 1:—

There is a cliff, whose high and bending head
Looks fearfully on the confined deep.

And, in the 'Faithful Shepherdess,' "bending plain," p. 105. Jonson has "bending vale," vii. 39.—T. WARTON.

[291] Ver. 1016. *And from thence can soar as soon*
To the corners of the moon.

Oberon says of the swiftness of his fairies, 'Mids. N. Dr.' a. iv. s. 1:—

We the globe can compass soon
Swifter than the wandering moon.

And Puck's fairy, ibid. a. ii. s. 1 :—

I do wander every where,
Swifter than the moone's sphere. T. WARTON.

292 Ver. 1020. *She can teach ye how to clime*, &c. Dr. Warburton has observed, that the last four verses furnished Pope with the thought for the conclusion of his 'Ode on St. Cecilia's Day.' A prior imitation may be traced in the close of Dryden's Ode.—TODD.

293 Ver. 1021. *The sphery chime.* "Chime," Ital. *Cima.* Yet he uses "chime" in the common sense, 'Ode Nativ.' v. 128. He may do so here, but then the expression is licentious, I suppose for the sake of the rhyme.—HURD.

The "sphery chime" is the music of the spheres.—T. WARTON.

294 Ver. 1022. The moral of this poem is very finely summed up in the six concluding lines: the thought contained in the last two might probably be suggested to our author by a passage in the 'Table of Cebes,' where Patience and Perseverance are represented stooping and stretching out their hands to help up those, who are endeavouring to climb the craggy hill of Virtue, and yet are too feeble to ascend of themselves.—THYER.

Had this learned and ingenious critic duly reflected on the lofty mind of Milton, "smit with the love of sacred song," and so often and so sublimely employed on topics of religion, he might readily have found a subject, to which the poet obviously and divinely alludes in these concluding lines, without fetching the thought from the 'Table of Cebes.' In the preceding remark, I am convinced Mr. Thyer had no ill intention: but, by overlooking so clear and pointed an allusion to a subject, calculated to kindle that lively glow in the bosom of every christian, which the

poet intended to excite, and by referring it to an image in a profane author, he may, beside stifling the sublime effect so happily produced, afford a handle to some, in these "evil days," who are willing to make the religion of Socrates and Cebes (or that of Nature) supersede the religion of Christ. "The moral of this poem is, indeed, very finely summed up in the six concluding lines;" in which, to wind up one of the most elegant productions of his genius, "the poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling," threw up its last glance to Heaven, in rapt contemplation of that stupendous mystery, whereby He, the lofty theme of 'Paradise Regained,' stooping from above all height, "bowed the heavens, and came down on earth, to atone as man for the sins of men, to strengthen feeble virtue by the influence of his grace, and to teach her to ascend his throne."—FRANCIS HENRY EGERTON, afterwards Earl of Bridgewater.

The Attendant Spirit opens the poem with a description of the rewards which Virtue promises, "after this mortal life, to her true servants:" the poem, therefore, may be considered more perfect, in closing, as it commenced, with the solemn and impressive sentiments of Scripture.—TODD.

In the peculiar disposition of the story, the sweetness of the numbers, the justness of the expression, and the moral it teaches, there is nothing extant in any language like the 'Mask of Comus.'—TOLAND.

Milton's 'Juvenile Poems' are so no otherwise, than as they were written in his younger years; for their dignity and excellence, they are sufficient to have set him among the most celebrated of the poets, even of the ancients themselves: his 'Mask' and 'Lycidas' are perhaps superior to all in their several kinds.—RICHARDSON.

'Comus' is written very much in imitation of Shakspeare's 'Tempest,' and the 'Faithful Shepherdess' of Fletcher; and though one of the first, is yet one of the most beautiful of Milton's compositions.—NEWTON.

Milton seems in this poem to have imitated Shakspeare's

manner more than in any other of his works; and it was very natural for a young author, preparing a piece for the stage, to propose to himself for a pattern the most celebrated master of English dramatic poetry.—THYER.

Milton has here more professedly imitated the manner of Shakspeare in his fairy scenes, than in any other of his works: and his poem is much the better for it, not only for the beauty, variety, and novelty of his images, but for a brighter vein of poetry, and an ease and delicacy of expression very superior to his natural manner.—WARBURTON.

If this Mask had been revised by Milton, when his ear and judgment were perfectly formed, it had been the most exquisite of all his poems. As it is, there are some puerilities in it, and many inaccuracies of expression and versification. The two editions of his poems are of 1645 and 1673. In 1645, he was, as he would think, better employed; in 1673, he would condemn himself for having written such a thing as a Mask, especially for a great lord, and a sort of viceroy.—HURD.

The greatest of Milton's juvenile performances is the 'Mask of Comus,' in which may very plainly be discovered the dawn or twilight of 'Paradise Lost.' Milton appears to have formed very early that system of diction, and mode of verse, which his maturer judgement approved, and from which he never endeavoured nor desired to deviate. Nor does 'Comus' afford only a specimen of his language; it exhibits likewise his power of description and his vigour of sentiment, employed in the praise and defence of virtue. A work more truly poetical is rarely found; allusions, images, and descriptive epithets embellish almost every period with lavish decoration: as a series of lines, therefore, it may be considered as worthy of all the admiration with which the votaries have received it; as a drama it is deficient. The action is not probable. A Mask, in those parts where supernatural intervention is admitted, must indeed be given up to all the freaks of imagination; but, so far as the action

is merely human, it ought to be reasonable, which can hardly be said of the conduct of the two Brothers; who, when their sister sinks with fatigue in a pathless wilderness, wander both away together in search of berries too far to find their way back, and leave a helpless lady to all the sadness and danger of solitude. This however is a defect overbalanced by its convenience. What deserves more reprehension is, that the prologue spoken in the wild wood by the Attendant Spirit is addressed to the audience; a mode of communication so contrary to the nature of dramatic representation, that no precedents can support it. The discourse of the Spirit is too long; an objection that may be made to almost all the following speeches: they have not the sprightliness of a dialogue animated by reciprocal contention, but seem rather declamations deliberately composed, and formally repeated, on a moral question: the auditor therefore listens as to a lecture, without passion, without anxiety. The song of Comus has airiness and jollity; but, what may recommend Milton's morals as well as his poetry, the invitations to pleasure are so general, that they excite no distinct images of corrupt enjoyment, and take no dangerous hold on the fancy. The following soliloquies of Comus and the Lady are elegant, but tedious. The song must owe much to the voice, if it ever can delight. At last the Brothers enter with too much tranquillity; and when they had feared lest their sister should be in danger, and hoped that she is not in danger, the Elder makes a speech in praise of chastity, and the Younger finds how fine it is to be a philosopher. Then descends the Spirit in form of a shepherd; and the Brother, instead of being in haste to ask his help, praises his singing, and inquires his business in that place. It is remarkable, that at this interview the Brother is taken with a short fit of rhyming. The Spirit relates that the Lady is in the power of Comus; the Brother moralises again; and the Spirit makes a long narration, of no use because it is false, and

therefore unsuitable to a good being. In all these parts the language is poetical, and the sentiments are generous; but there is something wanting to allure attention. The dispute between the Lady and Comus is the most animated and affecting scene of the drama, and wants nothing but a brisker reciprocation of objections and replies to invite attention, and detain it. The songs are vigorous, and full of imagery; but they are harsh in their diction, and not very musical in their numbers. Throughout the whole, the figures are too bold, and the language too luxuriant for dialogue: it is a drama in the epic style, inelegantly splendid, and tediously instructive.—JOHNSON.

Milton's 'Comus' is, I think, one of the finest productions of modern times; and I do not know whether to admire most the poetry of it, or the philosophy, which is of the noblest kind. The subject of it I like better than that of the 'Paradise Lost,' which, I think, is not human enough to touch the common feelings of humanity, as poetry ought to do; the divine personages he has introduced are of too high a kind to act any part in poetry, and the scene of the action is, for the greater part, quite out of nature: but the subject of the 'Comus' is a fine mythological tale, marvellous enough, as all poetical subjects should be, but at the same time human. He begins his piece in the manner of Euripides; and the descending Spirit that prologuises, makes the finest and grandest opening of any theatrical piece that I know, ancient or modern. The conduct of the piece is answerable to the beginning, and the versification of it is finely varied by short and long verses, blank and rhyming, and the sweetest songs that ever were composed; nor do I know any thing in English poetry comparable to it in this respect, except Dryden's 'Ode on St. Cecilia;' which, for the length of the piece, has all the variety of versification that can well be imagined. As to the style of 'Comus,' it is more elevated, I think, than that of any of his writings, and so much above what is written at present, that I am in-

clined to make the same distinction in the English language, that Homer made of the Greek in his time; and to say that Milton's language is the language of the gods; whereas we of this age speak and write the language of mere mortal men. If the 'Comus' was to be properly represented, with all the decorations which it requires, of machinery, scenery, dress, music, and dancing, it would be the finest exhibition that ever was seen upon any modern stage: but I am afraid, with all these, the principal part would be still wanting; I mean, players that could wield the language of Milton, and pronounce those fine periods of his, by which he has contrived to give his poetry the beauty of the finest prose composition, and without which there can be nothing great or noble in composition of any kind. Or if we could find players who had breath and organs (for these, as well as other things, begin to fail in this generation), and sense and taste enough, properly to pronounce such periods, I doubt it would not be easy to find an audience that could relish them, or perhaps they would not have attention and comprehension sufficient to connect the sense of them; being accustomed to that trim, spruce, short cut of a style, which Tacitus, and his modern imitators, French and English, have made fashionable.—Lord Monboddo.

In poetical and picturesque circumstances, in wildness of fancy and imagery, and in weight of sentiment and moral, how greatly does 'Comus' excel the 'Aminta' of Tasso, and the 'Pastor Fido' of Guarini, which Milton, from his love of Italian poetry, must frequently have read! 'Comus,' like these two, is a pastoral drama; and I have often wondered it is not mentioned as such.—Jos. Warton.

We must not read 'Comus' with an eye to the stage, or with the expectation of dramatic propriety. Under this restriction, the absurdity of the Spirit speaking to an audience in a solitary forest at midnight, and the want of reciprocation in the dialogue, are overlooked. 'Comus' is

a suite of speeches, not interesting by discrimination of character; not conveying a variety of incidents, nor gradually exciting curiosity: but perpetually attracting attention by sublime sentiment, by fanciful imagery of the richest vein, by an exuberance of picturesque description, poetical allusion, and ornamental expression. While it widely departs from the grotesque anomalies of the mask now in fashion, it does not nearly approach to the natural constitution of a regular play. There is a chastity in the application and conduct of the machinery; and Sabrina is introduced with much address, after the Brothers had imprudently suffered the enchantment of Comus to take effect. This is the first time the old English mask was in some degree reduced to the principles and form of a rational composition: yet still it could not but retain some of its arbitrary peculiarities. The poet had here properly no more to do with the pathos of tragedy, than the character of comedy; nor do I know that he was confined to the usual modes of theatrical interlocution. A great critic observes, that the dispute between the Lady and Comus is the most animated and affecting scene of the piece. Perhaps some other scenes, either consisting only of a soliloquy, or of three or four speeches only, have afforded more true pleasure. The same critic thinks, that in all the moral dialogue, although the language is poetical, and the sentiments generous, something is still wanting to "allure attention." But surely, in such passages, sentiments so generous, and language so poetical, are sufficient to rouse all our feelings. For this reason I cannot admit his position, that 'Comus' is a drama "tediously instructive:" and if, as he says, to these ethical discussions "the auditor listens as to a lecture, without passion, without anxiety," yet he listens with elevation and delight. The action is said to be improbable; because the Brothers, when their sister sinks with fatigue in a pathless wilderness, wander both away together in search of berries, too far to find their way back; and leave a helpless lady to all the sadness and danger of solitude. But

here is no desertion or neglect of the Lady: the Brothers leave their sister under a spreading pine in the forest, fainting for refreshment: they go to procure berries or some other fruit for her immediate relief; and, with great probability, lose their way in going or returning; to say nothing of the poet's art, in making this very natural and simple accident to be productive of the distress, which forms the future business and complication of the fable. It is certainly a fault that the Brothers, although with some indications of anxiety, should enter with so much tranquillity, when their sister is lost, and at leisure pronounce philosophical panegyrics on the mysteries of virginity: but we must not too scrupulously attend to the exigencies of situation, nor suffer ourselves to suppose that we are reading a play, which Milton did not mean to write. These splendid insertions will please, independently of the story, from which however they result; and their elegance and sublimity will overbalance their want of place. In a Greek tragedy, such sentimental harangues, arising from the subject, would have been given to a Chorus. On the whole, whether 'Comus' be or be not deficient as a drama, whether it is considered as an epic drama, a series of lines, a mask, or a poem; I am of opinion, that our author is here only inferior to his own 'Paradise Lost.'—T. WARTON.

Milton's 'Comus' is, in my judgment, the most beautiful and perfect poem of that sublime genius.—WAKEFIELD.

Perhaps the conduct and conversation of the Brothers, which Mr. Warton blames in the preceding note, may not be altogether indefensible. They have lost their way in a forest at night, and are in "the want of light and noise:" it would now be dangerous for them to run about an unknown wilderness; and, if they should separate, in order to seek their sister, they might lose each other: in the uncertainty of what was their best plan, they therefore naturally wait, expecting to hear perhaps the cry of their lost sister, or some noise to which they would have directed

their steps. The Younger Brother anxiously expresses his apprehensions for his sister: the Elder, in reply, trusts that she is not in danger; and, instead of giving way to those fears, which the Younger repeats, expatiates on the strength of chastity; by the illustration of which argument he confidently maintains the hope of their sister's safety, while he beguiles the perplexity of their own situation. It has been observed, that 'Comus' is not calculated to shine in theatric exhibition for those very reasons which constitute its essential and specific merit. The 'Pastor Fido' of Guarini, which also ravishes the reader, and 'The Faithful Shepherdess' of Fletcher, could not succeed upon the stage. However, it is sufficient, that 'Comus' displays the true sources of poetical delight and moral instruction, in its charming imagery, in its original conceptions, in its sublime diction, in its virtuous sentiments. Its few inaccuracies weigh but as dust in the balance against its general merit: and, in short, if I may be allowed respectfully to differ from the high authority of a preceding note, I am of opinion, that this enchanting poem, or pastoral drama, is both gracefully splendid, and delightfully instructive.—Todd.

Dr. Johnson is more inclined to be favourable to 'Comus' than to any other poem of Milton: he begins fairly enough, and gives it some of the praises which justly belong to it; but he gradually returns to his captious ill-humour, and ends with saying that it is "inelegantly splendid and tediously instructive." After this close, what is the value of his praise? If it is truly poetical, it cannot be inelegantly splendid! Milton's decorations are never out of place in this Mask: it contains not a single image or epithet which does not fill the reader of taste with delight: it contains no passion, but he did not intend it. Masks were always designed to play with the fancy; and from beginning to end, without the abatement of a single line, Milton has effected this. Such a series of rural and pastoral picturesqueness

was never before brought together. It is worthy of remark with what admirable skill the poet gathered from all his predecessors, Spenser, Shakspeare, Beaumont and Fletcher, Drayton, and twenty more, every happy adjective of description and imaginative force, and combined them into the texture of his own fiction. As his power of creation was great, so was his memory both exact and abundant: whatever he borrowed, he made new by the fervid power of amalgamation.

The flowing strains of the whole poem are eloquent and beautiful, enriched with philosophic moral learning, and exalted by pure, generous, and lofty sentiment. Thus:—

> Can any mortal mixture of earth's mould
> Breathe such divine enchanting ravishment?
> Sure something holy lodges in that breast,
> And with these raptures moves the vocal air
> To testify his hidden residence!

Again, v. 476:—

> How charming is divine philosophy!
> Not harsh and crabbed, as dull fools suppose,
> But musical as is Apollo's lute,
> And a perpetual feast of nectar'd sweets,
> Where no crude surfeit reigns.

This poem is stated to have been the congenial prelude to 'Paradise Lost.' In that opinion I do not concur: the fable is too gay; the images are too full of delight: all the topics lie too much upon the surface. There is a rich invention, but it has not the depth, or strength, or sublimity of 'Paradise Lost.' This is playful; that is full of solemnity and awe. More than that, though the combination gives originality to 'Comus,' yet it has nothing like the degree of originality of the great epic; of which a large portion of the invention has no prototype. Nor do I admit that even the language is of the same structure: it is, for the most part, more fluent and soft: it is, in short, pastoral, while the other is heroic.

The sort of spiritual beings, which is introduced into 'Comus,' is of a much more humble degree than those of the latter poems. These invisible inhabitants of the earth gratify the gay freaks of our imagination: they do not excite the profounder movements of the soul, and fill us with a sublime terror, like Satan and his crews of fallen angels.

In the long interval between the composition of the Mask, and of 'Paradise Lost,' the wings of Milton's genius had expanded, and strengthened an hundred-fold: he was no longer a shepherd, of whose enchanting pipe the beautiful echoes resounded through the woods; but a sage, an oracle, and a prophet, with the inspired tongue of a divinity.

I have observed, from the words of several of the critics here cited, that they have an opinion of poetry which I cannot believe to be quite correct. They seem to assume that picturesque imagery, drawn from the surface of natural scenery, combined with a sort of wild fiction of story which goes beyond the bounds of reality, constitutes the primary and most unmixed essence of poetry.—I admit that it does constitute very pure and beautiful poetry; but not the highest. The highest must go beyond sublunary objects: there must be an invention of character, not only ideal, but sublime: there must be intermingled intellectual and argumentative greatness: there must be a fable, which embodies abstract truths of severe and mighty import: there must be distinct characters, elevated by grand passions, each acting according to his own appropriate impulses, and all going forward in regular progression, according to the rules of probability, to the accomplishment of the end proposed.

This has been effected by Milton's epics; but there certainly is an implication on the part of these critics, that these compositions have not as much unmixed and positive poetry as the 'Comus;' and this, because of the greater variety of their ingredients, and the introduction of

other matter besides imagery and description. Such a reason shows the narrowness of their conception of this divine art. All the finest passages of poetry are complex, in which the heart and understanding have essential co-operation: the bard must imagine what the heart must colour, or perhaps instigate, and the understanding enlighten. Imagery is material, and will not do alone; there must be the union of spirituality with it. The fault of a great part of Pope is, that there is nothing but reasoning, without either imagination or sentiment.

But, to return to 'Comus,' let it not be inferred that I mean in the smallest degree to detract from its merits. I only wish to protest against rules and definitions injurious to still greater poems of the same inimitable author! 'Comus' is perfect in its kind; but a pastoral Mask cannot be put upon a footing with a grand heroic poem.

Milton, when he wrote these strains, was in the very opening of early youth, not more than twenty-four years old. Then all was,—

The purple light of love, and bloom of young desires.

The woods and the rivers and all nature then seemed to his eyes to smile with delight; but as years passed along, and he saw the obliquities of mankind and the sorrows of life, his lays took a deeper tone, and his music was more magnificent and soul-moving. The Lady and the two Brothers in 'Comus' are all calm philosophy, and tender, hopeful confidence: to them the dawn is joy; the night-fall, peaceful slumbers: the demons of darkness dare not hurt them: the Lady has faith, even when left alone amid the dangers of a haunted forest. O fond imagination! O beamy visionariness of innocent inexperience!

ARCADES:

PART OF A MASK,

PRESENTED AT HAREFIELD

BEFORE

ALICE, COUNTESS DOWAGER OF DERBY.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

The same character may be given of the style, sentiments, imagery, and tone of these Fragments, as far as they go, as of 'Comus.' Warton observes,—

"Unquestionably this Mask was a much longer performance. Milton seems only to have written the poetical part, consisting of these three songs, and the recitative soliloquy of the Genius: the rest was probably prose and machinery. In many of Jonson's Masques, the poet but rarely appears, amidst a cumbersome exhibition of heathen gods and mythology. 'Arcades' was acted by persons of Lady Derby's own family. The Genius says, v. 26:—

> Stay, gentle swains; for, though in this disguise,
> I see bright honour sparkle through your eyes:

that is, 'although ye are disguised like rustics, I perceive that ye are of honourable birth; your nobility cannot be concealed.'"

Many parts of the soliloquy of the Genius are very highly poetical, as the passage beginning at v. 56:—

> And early, ere the odorous breath of morn
> Awakes the slumbering leaves, or tassel'd horn
> Shakes the high thicket, haste I all about,
> Number my ranks, and visit every sprout
> With puissant words, and murmurs made to bless.

PRELIMINARY NOTES

ON

ARCADES.

HAREFIELD.

We are told by Norden, an accurate topographer, who wrote about the year 1590, in his 'Speculum Britanniæ,' under Harefield in Middlesex, "There sir Edmond Anderson, knight, lord chief iustice of the common pleas, hath a faire house standing on the edge of the hill; the riuer Colne passing neare the same, through the pleasant meddowes and sweet pastures, yealding both delight and profit." 'Spec. Brit.' p. i. page 21. I viewed this house a few years ago, when it was for the most part remaining in its original state: it has since been pulled down: the porter's lodges on each side of the gateway are converted into a commodious dwelling-house: it is near Uxbridge: and Milton, when he wrote 'Arcades,' was still living with his father at Horton near Colnebrook in the same neighbourhood. He mentions the singular felicity he had in vain anticipated, in the society of his friend Deodate, on the shady banks of the river Colne. 'Epitaph. Damon.' v. 149.

> Imus, et arguta paulum recubamus in umbra,
> Aut ad aquas Colni, &c.

Amidst the fruitful and delightful scenes of this river, the nymphs and shepherds had no reason to regret, as in the third Song, the Arcadian "Ladon's lilied banks."—T. Warton.

See an account of Harefield, in Lysons's 'Environs of London,' with a print of the Countess of Derby's monument there.

It is probable, that these "persons of Lady Derby's own family" were the children of the Earl of Bridgewater, who had married a daughter of the Countess: and 'Arcades' perhaps was acted the year before 'Comus.' In 1632 Milton went to reside with his father at Horton, in the neighbourhood of Harefield; and might have been soon afterwards desired to compose this dramatic entertainment. Lord Brackley, Mr. Thomas Egerton, and Lady Alice Egerton, the performers in 'Comus,' appeared upon the stage at court in 1633, in Carew's Mask of 'Cœlum Britannicum;' and 'Arcades' might be a domestic exhibition somewhat prior to that of Carew's Mask; as being intended perhaps to try, and encourage, their confidence and skill, before they performed more publicly. Among the manuscripts that once belonged to Lord Chancellor Egerton, and which are now in the possession of the Marquis of Stafford, there is a curious illustration of domestic manners, on three folio sheets, in an "Account of disbursements for Harefield, where the Lord Keeper Egerton and the Countess of Derby resided in 1602."—Todd.

COUNTESS DOWAGER OF DERBY.

Alice, Countess Dowager of Derby, married Ferdinando Lord Strange; who, on the death of his father Henry, in 1594, became Earl of Derby, but died the next year. She was the sixth daughter of Sir John Spenser of Althorp in Northamptonshire: she was afterwards married [in 1600] to Lord Chancellor Egerton, who died in 1617. See Dugd.

Baron. iii. 251. 414. She died Jan. 26, 1635-6, and was buried at Harefield: 'Arcades' could not therefore have been acted after 1636.

Milton is not the only great English poet who has celebrated this Countess Dowager of Derby. She was the sixth daughter, as we have seen, of Sir John Spenser, with whose family Spenser the poet claimed an alliance. In his 'Colin Clout's come home again,' written about 1595, he mentions her under the appellation of Amaryllis, with her sisters Phyllis, or Elizabeth; and Charillis, or Anne; these three of Sir John Spenser's daughters being best known at court. See v. 546.

> Ne less praise-worthie are the sisters three,
> The honor of the noble familie,
> Of which I meanest boast myselfe to be;
> And most that unto them I am so nie:
> Phyllis, Charillis, and sweet Amaryllis.

After a panegyric on the first two, he next comes to Amaryllis, or Alice, our Lady, the Dowager of the above-mentioned Ferdinando Lord Derby, lately dead:—

> But Amaryllis, whether fortunate
> Or else vnfortunate may I aread,
> That freed is from Cupids yoke by fate,
> Since which she doth new bands aduenture dread.—
> Shepheard, whatever thou hast heard to be
> In this or that praysd diuersly apart,
> In her thou maiest them all assembled see,
> And seald vp in the threasure of her heart.

And in the same poem, he thus apostrophises to her late husband earl Ferdinand, under the name Amyntas. See v. 434.

> Amyntas quite is gone, and lies full low,
> Having his Amaryllis left to mone!
> Helpe, o ye shepheards, help ye all in this;—
> Her losse is yours, your losse Amyntas is;

Amyntas, floure of shepheards pride forlorne:
He, whilest he liued, was the noblest swaine
That euer piped on an oaten quill;
Both did he other which could pipe maintaine,
And eke could pipe himselfe with passing skill.

And to the same Lady Alice, when Lady Strange, before her husband Ferdinand's succession to the earldom, Spenser addresses his 'Tears of the Muses,' published in 1591, in a dedication of the highest regard; where he speaks of "your excellent beautie, your virtuous behauiour, and your noble match with that most honourable lorde the verie patterne of right nobilitie." He then acknowledges the particular bounties which she had conferred upon the poets. Thus the lady who presided at the representation of Milton's 'Arcades,' was not only the theme, but the patroness of Spenser. The peerage book of this most respectable countess is the poetry of her times.—T. WARTON.

Alice, Countess of Derby, was the youngest of six daughters of Sir John Spenser of Althorp, in Northamptonshire, who died 8th November, 1586, by Katharine, daughter of Sir Thomas Kitson, of Hengrave in Suffolk, knight,* which Sir John was son of Sir William Spenser, of Althorp, who died 22nd June, 1532, by Susan, daughter of Sir Richard Knightley, of Fawsley, in Northamptonshire. Sir William was son of another Sir John Spenser, of Althorp, who died 14th April, 1532, only two months before his son, by Isabel, daughter and coheir of Walter Graunt, of Snitterfield, in Warwickshire, esq.; he was son of William Spenser, esq., of Redbourne, in Warwickshire, who lived in the reign of Henry VII, by Elizabeth, sister of Sir Richard Empson, knight.

The Countess of Derby's five sisters were all honourably married; and her father was a man of a great estate.

Of her three daughters and coheirs by the Earl of Derby, Anne married Grey Brydges, fifth Lord Chandos; Frances

* See Mr. Gage's splendid 'History of Hengrave.'

married John Egerton, first Earl of Bridgewater; and Elizabeth married Henry Hastings, Earl of Huntingdon.

Todd mentions that Marston wrote a Mask, intitled, "The Lord and Lady of Huntingdon's entertainment of their right noble mother, Alice, Countess Dowager of Derby, the first night of her Honour's arrival at the house of Ashby." This Todd found still remaining in manuscript in the Bridgewater library; and has given a long account of it not necessary to be repeated here.

Lord Falkland wrote a poetical epitaph on this Countess of Huntingdon.

Sir John Spenser, of Althorp, the brother of Alice, Countess of Derby, died 9th January, 1599. His only son, Sir Robert Spenser, was created Lord Spenser of Wormleighton, by King James I, on 21st July, 1603, and died 25th October, 1627.

Camden, in his 'Britannia,' speaks thus of Althorp:— "Althorp, the seat of the noble family of Spenser, knights, allied to very many houses of great worth and honour, out of which Sir Robert Spenser, the fifth knight in a continual succession, a worthy encourager of virtue and learning, was by his most serene majesty King James, lately advanced to the honour of Baron Spenser of Wormleighton."

William, who succeeded his father Robert, as second lord Spenser, died 1636, aged forty-five, and was succeeded by his son Henry, third baron, who was created Earl of Sunderland, 8th June, 1643, and slain at the battle of Newbury, on 20th September following, at the age of twenty-three: he married Lady Dorothy Sidney, daughter of Robert, Earl of Leicester (Waller's Saccharissa). See Lord Clarendon's character of him.

ARCADES.

Part of an Entertainment presented to the Countess Dowager of Derby at Harefield, by some noble persons of her family; who appear on the scene in pastoral habit, moving toward the seat of state, with this song:—

I. SONG.

Look, nymphs and shepherds, look,[1]
What sudden blaze of majesty
Is that which we from hence descry,
Too divine to be mistook:
This, this is she[2]
To whom our vows and wishes bend;
Here our solemn search hath end.
Fame, that, her high worth to raise,
Seem'd erst so lavish and profuse,
We may justly now accuse
Of detraction from her praise:
Less than half we find express'd;
Envy bid conceal the rest.

Mark, what radiant state she spreads,
In circle round her shining throne,
Shooting her beams like silver threads;[3]
This, this is she alone,
Sitting like a goddess bright,
In the centre of her light.
Might she the wise Latona be,
Or the tower'd Cybele
Mother of a hundred gods?
Juno dares not give her odds.[4]
Who had thought this clime had held
A deity so unparallel'd?

As they come forward, the Genius of the wood appears, and, turning toward them, speaks:—

Gen. Stay, gentle swains; for, though in this disguise,
I see bright honour sparkle through your eyes:
Of famous Arcady ye are, and sprung
Of that renowned flood, so often sung,
Divine Alpheus,[5] who by secret sluce
Stole under seas to meet his Arethuse;
And ye, the breathing roses of the wood,
Fair silver-buskin'd nymphs, as great and good;
I know, this quest of yours, and free intent,
Was all in honour and devotion meant
To the great mistress of yon princely shrine,
Whom with low reverence I adore as mine;
And, with all helpful service, will comply
To further this night's glad solemnity;
And lead ye, where ye may more near behold
What shallow-searching Fame hath left untold;

Which I full oft, amidst these shades alone,
Have sat to wonder at, and gaze upon:
For know, by lot from Jove I am the power
Of this fair wood, and live in oaken bower,
To nurse the saplings tall, and curl the grove[6]
With ringlets quaint, and wanton windings wove:
And all my plants I save from nightly ill
Of noisome winds, and blasting vapours chill:
And from the boughs brush off the evil dew,[7]
And heal the harms of thwarting thunder blue,
Or what the cross dire-looking planet smites,[8]
Or hurtful worm with canker'd venom bites.
When evening gray doth rise, I fetch my round
Over the mount, and all this hallow'd ground;
And early, ere the odorous breath of morn
Awakes the slumbering leaves,[9] or tassel'd horn[10]
Shakes the high thicket, haste I all about,
Number my ranks, and visit every sprout[11]
With puissant words, and murmurs made to bless:
But else, in deep of night, when drowsiness
Hath lock'd up mortal sense, then listen I
To the celestial sirens' harmony,
That sit upon the nine infolded spheres,[12]
And sing to those that hold the vital shears,
And turn the adamantine spindle[13] round,
On which the fate of gods and men is wound.
Such sweet compulsion[14] doth in musick lie,
To lull the daughters of Necessity,
And keep unsteady Nature to her law,
And the low world in measured motion draw
After the heavenly tune, which none can hear
Of human mould, with gross unpurged ear;[15]

And yet such musick worthiest were to blaze
The peerless highth of her immortal praise,
Whose lustre leads us, and for her most fit,
If my inferiour hand or voice could hit
Inimitable sounds: yet, as we go,
Whate'er the skill of lesser gods can show,
I will assay, her worth to celebrate,
And so attend ye toward her glittering state;[16]
Where ye may all, that are of noble stem,
Approach, and kiss her sacred vesture's hem.[17]

II. SONG.

O'er the smooth enamel'd green
Where no print of step hath been,
Follow me, as I sing,
And touch the warbled string,
Under the shady roof
Of branching elm star-proof.[18]
Follow me;
I will bring you where she sits,
Clad in splendour as befits
Her deity.
Such a rural queen
All Arcadia hath not seen.

III. SONG.

Nymphs and shepherds, dance no more
By sandy Ladon's lilied banks;
On old Lycæus, or Cyllene hoar,
Trip no more in twilight ranks;
Though Erymanth your loss deplore,
A better soil shall give ye thanks.

From the stony Mænalus
Bring your flocks, and live with us;
Here ye shall have greater grace,
To serve the lady of this place.
Though Syrinx your Pan's mistress were,
Yet Syrinx well might wait on her.
Such a rural queen
All Arcadia hath not seen.

NOTES ON ARCADES.

[1] Verse 1. *Look, nymphs and shepherds, look*, &c. See the ninth division of Spenser's 'Epithalamion;' and Fletcher's 'Faithful Shepherdess,' a. i. s. 1.—T. Warton.

[2] Ver. 5. *This, this is she.* Our curiosity is gratified in discovering, even from slight and almost imperceptible traits, that Milton had here been looking back to Jonson, the most eminent mask-writer that had yet appeared, and that he had fallen upon some of his formularies and modes of address. For thus Jonson, in an 'Entertaynment at Altrop,' 1603. Works, 1616. p. 874:

This is shee,
This is shee,
In whose world of grace, &c.

T. Warton.

[3] Ver. 16. *Shooting her beams like silver threads.* See 'Par. Lost,' b. iv. 555. But here Milton seems to bear in mind the cloth of state under which queen Elizabeth is seated, and which is represented, 'Faer. Qu.' v. ix. 28.—Todd.

[4] Ver. 23. *Give her odds.* Too lightly expressed for the occasion.—HURD.

[5] Ver. 30. *Divine Alpheus,* &c. Virgil, 'Æn.' iii. 694:

> Alpheum, fama est, huc Elidis amnem
> Occultas egisse vias subter mare, qui nunc
> Ore, Arethusa, tuo, &c. NEWTON.

[6] Ver. 46. *And curl the grove.* So Drayton, 'Polyolb.' s. vii. vol. ii. p. 786. of a grove on a hill,

> Where she her curled head unto the eye may show.
> T. WARTON.

[7] Ver. 50. *And from the boughs brush off the evil dew.* The expression and idea are Shakspearian, but in a different sense and application. Caliban says, 'Tempest,' a. i. s. 4:—

> As wicked dew as e'er my mother brush'd,
> With raven's feather, from unwholesome fen, &c.

Compare 'Paradise Lost,' b. v. 429.

The phrase hung on the mind of Gray:—

> Brushing with hasty steps the dew away.
> T. WARTON.

[8] Ver. 51.

> *And heal the harms of thwarting thunder blue,*
> *Or what the cross dire-looking planet smites.*

Compare Shakspeare, 'Julius Cæsar,' a. i. s. 3. 'King Lear,' a. iv. s. 7.—T. WARTON.

[9] Ver. 57. *The slumbering leaves.* Ovid, 'Met.' xi. 600. "Non moti flamine rami."—TODD.

[10] Ibid. *Tassel'd horn.* Spenser, 'Faer. Queene,' i. viii.

a horn of bugle small,
Which hung adowne his side in twisted gold
And tassels gay. NEWTON.

[illegible] Ver. 58. *Haste I all about,*
Number my ranks, and visit every sprout.

So the magician Ismeno, when he consigns the enchanted forest to his demons, 'Gier. Lib.' c. xiii. st. 8. Poets are magicians: what they create they command. The business of one imaginary being is easily transferred to another; from a bad to a good demon.—T. WARTON.

[12] Ver. 62. *Then listen I*
To the celestial sirens' harmony,
That sit upon the nine infolded spheres.

This is Plato's system. Fate, or Necessity, holds a spindle of adamant; and, with her three daughters, Lachesis, Clotho, and Atropos, who handle the vital web wound about the spindle, she conducts or turns the heavenly bodies: nine Muses, or sirens, sit on the summit of the spheres, which, in their revolutions, produce the most ravishing musical harmony: to this harmony, the three daughters of Necessity perpetually sing in correspondent tones: in the mean time, the adamantine spindle, which is placed in the lap or on the knees of Necessity, and on which "the fate of men and gods is wound," is also revolved.—T. WARTON.

[13] Ver. 66. *The adamantine spindle.* In a fragment of Sophocles's 'Phædra,' preserved in Stobæus, the Parcæ have adamantine shuttles, with which they weave the appointed fates of mortals.—DUNSTER.

[14] Ver. 68. *Such sweet compulsion, &c.* See 'Par. Lost,' ix. 474.—TODD.

[15] Ver. 72.

After the heavenly tune, which none can hear
Of human mould, with gross unpurged ear.

I do not recollect this reason in Plato, the 'Somnium Scipionis,' or Macrobius: but our author, in an academic Prolusion on the 'Musick of the Spheres,' having explained Plato's theory, assigns a similar reason:—"Quod autem nos hanc minime audiamus harmoniam, sane in causa videtur esse furacis Promethei audacia, quæ tot mala hominibus invexit, et simul hanc felicitatem nobis abstulit, qua nec unquam frui licebit, dum sceleribus cooperti belluinis, cupiditatibus obrutescimus: at si pura, si nivea gestaremus pectora, tum quidem suavissima illa stellarum circumeuntium musica personarent aures nostræ et opplerentur."—T. WARTON.

Compare Shakspeare, 'Midsummer Night's Dream,' a. iii. s. 1:—

> And I will purge thy mortal grossness so,
> That thou shalt like an airy spirit go.

And see 'Comus,' v. 997.—T. WARTON.

See also his 'Prose Works,' edit. 1698, vol. i. 153.—"God purged also our deaf ears, and prepared them to attend his second warning trumpet," &c.—TODD.

[16] Ver. 81. *And so attend ye toward her glittering state.* See Note on 'Il Penseroso,' v. 37. A "state" signified, not so much a throne or chair of state, as a canopy: thus Drayton, 'Polyolb.' s. xxvi. vol. iii. p. 1168, of a royal palace:—

> Who, led from room to room, amazed is to see
> The furniture and states, which all embroideries be,
> The richest [illegible] sumptuous beds, &c. T. WARTON.

[illegible] Ver. 83. *Approach, and kiss her sacred vesture's hem.* Fairfax, in the metrical Dedication of his Tasso to queen

Elizabeth, commands his Muse not to approach too boldly, nor to soil "her vesture's hem."—T. WARTON.

" Ver. 89. *Of branching elm star-proof.* One of Peacham's 'Emblems' is the picture of a large and lofty grove, which defies the influence of the moon and stars appearing over it. This grove, in the verses affixed, is said to be "not pierceable to power of any starre."—T. WARTON.

END OF VOL. V.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY A. J. VALPY, M.A.
RED LION COURT, FLEET STREET.

00052797

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 17 February, 2016